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SERMONS,

PRINCIPALLY,

Oct. 23. 1789.

DRESSED TO YOUTH.

By T. TOULMIN, A. M.

from the author.
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SECOND EDITION,

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

TWO SERMONS, NEVER BEFORE PRINTED,

AND

SOME FORMS OF PRAYER.

Dii probos mores docili Juvencur.

Dii senectuti placida quietem,

— — — — — HOLLAND.

Καὶ τὰ παιδείας καὶ λαμβανέωσαν
καὶ τὴν τιμὴν τοῦ φοροῦντος παρὰ Θεοῦ ἰσχυεῖ· τί
ἀγαπᾷ αὐτὴν παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ δύναται· τίς ὁ φόβος αὐτῆς
καλῶς καὶ μέλας, καὶ ζῶν πάντας τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ οὕτως
ἀναγενομένους ἐν καθάρᾳ διανοίᾳ.

CLEMENTIS EPIST. AD CORINTHIOS.

TAUNTON:

PRINTED BY T. NORRIS, AND SOLD BY MR. TOULMIN.

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TO THE RISING GENERATION:

PARTICULARLY TO

THE YOUTH WHO ATTEND HIS MINISTRY

(WITH AN IMMEDIATE VIEW TO WHOSE BENEFIT THEY ARE PUBLISHED),

THESE DISCOURSES,

AS A TOKEN OF HIS WARM CONCERN FOR
THEIR BEST INTEREST,

ARE,

WITH REQUESTING A SERIOUS AND CANDID
PERUSAL,

HUMBLY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

TAUNTON, JAN. 22, 1970.

TO THE RISING GENERATION

PARTICULARLY

TO THE YOUTH WHO FIND HIMSELF

WITH AN IMMEDIATE VIEW TO WORK
THAT THEY ARE PUBLISHING

THESE DISCOURSES

AS A TOKEN OF HIS WARM CONCERN FOR
THEIR BEST INTEREST

AND

IN EXHIBITING A SERIES OF CANDID

HUMILY DEDICATED

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

THE AUTHOR

ADVERTISEMENT

To the SECOND EDITION.

THE approbation, with which the following discourses, now reprinted, have been favoured, and the enquiry for them, since the first impression was sold, have induced the author to bring forward this second and corrected edition.

He has also added Two Discourses, the *second* and *fifth*, not before published: because they not only fall in with the general design of the publication, but are, particularly, adapted to the circumstances of young persons, and contribute to complete a kind of regular series of practical addresses, which, in the arrangement now assigned to them, naturally connect with one another.

The *first* discourse aims to give a concise and comprehensive view of the great principles of natural and revealed religion, and of their reasonableness, evidences and tendency. The *second* points out the obligations lying upon those young persons, who have been educated in the know-

vi A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

ledge of these principles. The *third* represents the nature, extent and advantages of that pious virtue which it recommends to the cultivation of youth. To this the *fourth* is a contrast, exhibiting, in the character of the prodigal, the folly and misery of youthful sins. The design of the *fifth* is to fix the impressions, it is hoped, the two preceding discourses may leave on the mind, by engaging the young reader to come to a determination for a life of Christian piety and virtue. The *sixth* urges one essential duty of the Christian profession, and one most important means of improving and perpetuating it. The *seventh* delineates the habitual influence of piety on the various circumstances of daily life. The *eighth* displays the advantages of it under the trials of the present state. The *ninth* brings up to the serious consideration of youth an event, against which the vigour of their years is no security. And the *tenth* leads their thoughts forward to the final result of the conduct we pursue, to the solemn issue of their actions, whether they be good or evil.

The *Prayers* are added, both to afford immediate aid to the sentiments and purposes of piety as they arise in the breast, and to furnish a manual of devotion.

By

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By the dates of the following sermons, and by the number of years which have elapsed since the first impression of them appeared, it may occur to the reader that most of them were composed by the author, in the very beginning of his ministry. The consideration that they were the result of his convictions and feelings, at a very early period of his own life, will, he would promise himself, rather prejudice young persons in their favour, and bespeak their attention to them.

At this distance of time, from whence most of them were first composed and delivered, the author can assure his young friends, that he reflects on it with devout joy, that his mind had an early tincture of pious sentiments: and, amidst a thousand blessings, for which it becomes him to bow, with gratitude, before the Father of mercies, he deems this, in a manner, the first and greatest, that, in his youthful years, he felt the power, and, by the gracious disposals of heaven, was led to obey the sacred dictates of religion.

He can not conclude this preface without expressing his grateful sense of the encouragement he hath received towards this publication. Were it his intention to present a list of subscribers, there would appear in it several names of the clergy and

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laity of the established church, which would do him honour: but he is particularly obliged to a considerable number of protestant dissenters in Lancashire, who not only engaged for a large proportion of copies, but have been urgent for the appearance of this volume.

Happy and thankful will he be, should these discourses, in the hands of divine providence, be the means of awakening and fixing a genuine and lively sense of piety in any young mind. With the hope of this, to the candour of the reader and the blessing of God he commends them.

P O S T S C R I P T.

THE author judges it right, ingenuously to say, that he hesitated about giving the *third* discourse a place in this edition; because it is grounded on a passage in the second chapter of Luke's gospel, and some learned men, at home and abroad, have made it doubtful at least, whether the two first chapters of that gospel are genuine. Marcion, an eminent writer in the first part of the second century, had a copy of Luke's gospel without them, and there are internal marks of their being spurious. (See Pritii Introductio in Lektionem Novi Testamenti, cap. xiii. p. 186. Theological Repository, vol. v.

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p. 130—146. And Priestley's History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ, v. iv. p. 1—165.) But, as there can be no doubt of the fact contained in the text to this discourse, for it is perfectly natural and would almost necessarily precede the character CHRIST supported, the author has, at the desire and judgment of some friends, which ought to have great weight with him, republished the discourse. No one should be alarmed at some doubts being expressed, concerning the authenticity of these chapters in Luke, or of any other part of scripture: for what will not bear examination is not worthy of defence or attachment; and our faith rests not upon the genuineness of particular books and chapters, but on the great facts, to which there is the concurring testimony of various witnesses. By doubts, leading to examination, the truth, in every case, comes to be ascertained and confirmed.

N. B. The passages between crotchets may be left out, when these discourses are read in the family, if the sermon be thought too long: and are thus marked, at the hint of a much respected friend, as a direction to shorten them.

Taunton, August 7, 1789.

CON-

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I.

Preached September 18, 1768.

The Grounds and Reasonableness of a Life of
Faith.

2 COR. V. 7.

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

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S E R M O N II.

Preached May 9, 1779.

The Happiness and Improvement of a pious
Descendant.

2 TIM. I. 5.

*When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that
is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grand-mother
Lois and thy mother Eunice ; and I am persuaded
that in thee also.*

p. 21

S E R M O N III.

Preached August 1, 1762.

Youth exhorted to seek the Favour of God and
Man.

LUKE II. 52.

*And JESUS increased in wisdom and stature, and in
favour with God and man.*

P. 43
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S E R M O N I V.

Preached September 16, 1764.

The Prodigal a Warning to Youth.

LUKE XV. 12—19.

And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

p. 63

S E R M O N V.

Preached March 13, 1785.

The Profession of Christianity urged on Youth.

2 JOHN,

C O N T E N T S. xiii

2 JOHN, verse 4.

I rejoiced greatly, that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

p. 85

S E R M O N VI.

Preached October 16, 1763.

The Pleas for neglecting public Worship considered.

NEHEM. xiii. 11.

Why is the house of God forsaken?

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S E R M O N VII.

Preached February 12, 1769.

The Influence of habitual Piety.

PROVERBS xiii. 17.

Be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long.

p. 129

S E R M O N VIII.

Preached January 3, 1769.

The Happiness that flows from religious Trust.

PSALM xxxiv. 8.

O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is man that trusteth in him.

p. 149

S E R M O N IX.

Preached May 10, 1767.

Reflexions on the Death of Youth.

LUKE

xiv C O N T E N T S.

LUKE vii. 12.

*Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city,
Behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only
son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much
people of the city was with her.* P. 171

S E R M O N X.

Preached February 14, 1762.

Youth reminded of the Connexion between the
Conduct of Man in this Life and his Con-
dition in a future State.

GAL. vi. 7.

*Be not deceived: GOD is not mocked: for whatsoever
a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* P. 197

P R A Y E R S.

*A Prayer for a young Person determining for a
religious Life.* P. 217

A Morning Prayer for a young Person. P. 221

*A Prayer from our LORD's Sermon on the Mount,
for any Part of the Day, when Leisure for devout
Retirement offers.* P. 224

Another Prayer for the same Purpose. P. 227

An Evening Prayer for a young Person. P. 229

A Morning or Evening Prayer for Families. P. 233

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S E R M O N I.

The Grounds and Reasonableness of a Life of Faith.

2 COR. v. 7.

FOR WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT.

[VARIOUS are the springs of conduct that belong to the human frame. Our earliest, strongest and most constant incentives to love or hatred, to fear or hope, are the impressions we receive from the sensible objects around us. But it is the use and business of reason, to correct and regulate the animal sensations. It is by thought and reflexion the great truths, that concern us as creatures formed for pious virtue, and accountable to the judge of the earth, are made present to the mind, and gain any power. For as to these truths, such is the imperfection and disadvantage of the present state, we are governed and influenced not by the sight of them, but by *faith*, or the persuasion of our minds.]

The Great God, who is the parent and LORD of the universe, no man hath seen or can see. JESUS CHRIST, the mediator and patron of our spiritual and eternal interests, though he once tabernacled in flesh, and conversed with man, is now withdrawn from our world. The grand trial we are all to take, is a distant and future event; it has been the expectation of many ages past, and ages are yet to revolve before its commencement. The world in which we are hereafter to live, its inhabitants, its dignities, its joys are unknown; not seen nor felt. There is no clear discernment, no sensible experience, no ocular proof of these objects. Yet the Christian treats them as the most solemn realities; and lives as if he saw these invisible things.

We walk (says the Apostle) *by faith, and not by sight; i. e.* We regulate our conduct not by the enjoyment of the visible things of this world, but by the faith and expectation of another and future world. We fear an invisible God. We love a SAVIOUR, whom we have not seen. We firmly expect a judgment to come. And we are ambitious to obtain the glory and happiness of the unseen world. By these objects, and not by those of sense and sight, are our choice, our tempers and our lives governed. We are strongly persuaded
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of their reality, and we are fully assured of their importance; and there is nothing we regard so much. This short, plain and comprehensive account does the Apostle give us of the swaying and general principle of a Christian life; it is faith in opposition to sight and enjoyment.

There is scarcely an office more important, or more suited to help and animate your faith and joy, than to lay before you, Christians, those considerations which show the propriety and reasonableness of your conduct. There is *no absurdity in supposing those things to be real and certain, which are to us invisible and future.* There is a *variety of clear and strong proofs, on which to build your faith of things you do not see.* There is a vast, an *infinite moment* in them, if they are true. And to walk by faith in them hath the best tendency to improve your virtue and your happiness. I would wish to argue these points with clearness and strength; as one who would gladly assist you to learn, to feel and remember; wherein your great duty and truest wisdom lie.

First, There is *no absurdity in supposing those things to be real and certain, which are to us invisible and future.* [If nothing, in our judgment and belief, was allowed an existence, but of

which we ourselves, or those with whom we converse, had ocular and sensible proofs, into what narrow bounds should we bring the world itself; and, in our conceptions, how vastly should we diminish the number of beings who have life, and the number of inanimate objects.

Our faculties are limited; our sphere and opportunities of knowledge are more limited. A very small part of nature falls under our notice. We can conceive of beings with whom no human converse was held, and of places far remote from the human step and eye. Nay, we have no doubt of the existence and reality of innumerable things, and parts in the universe, which are and for ever must remain out of sight. Therefore,] though the objects of religious faith are unseen and distant, there is nothing in this circumstance merely, that renders the supposition of their reality absurd. And there is not any contradiction, or impossibility in the things themselves.

It is no more absurd to suppose, that there is a God, the wise and powerful architect of the world, than that the houses we inhabit were raised by some skilful builders; though they themselves have been long since removed out of life, and their names are forgotten. There is no more
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absurdity in supposing that there is a being infinitely above us, in perfection and dominion, than that there are creatures below us so mean and inconsiderable, as not to be visible to the naked eye. There is no more absurdity in supposing the reality of a great and good person, whom God *bath exalted to be a prince and a saviour*, than that in former times, or in the present, one man should have a dominion and authority over multitudes for their good, though the person of majesty is visible to very few of those over whom he rules. There is no more absurdity in supposing that we shall live again, and that life shall be lengthened out through eternal ages, than that we should be born into this world, and should rise from infancy to manhood, though a few years back we were not. A future judgment at the bar of God, is as consistent and rational a transaction, as a judgment and trial now at the tribunal of men.

So far from there being any absurdity in supposing these things to be as real as those we now see : the present constitution, present and visible objects, are *samples* and *pledges* of things invisible. Our great superiority over the mite and the worm, bears some, though a faint, resemblance to the infinite superiority of God over us. The foresight and prudence of man is a pattern of the foresight

and providence of the Deity. The government one man exercises over another, and the benefits which one man is the means of conveying to another, afford an emblem of the more perfect, gracious, and universal authority of CHRIST over us all. This life contains only the seeds and first principles of a life to be renewed beyond the grave; the present is the embryo of our future existence. The trial and judgment of our actions, which now takes place in each man's conscience, and which is more publicly executed by magistrates, is an anticipation of a more exact, universal, and decisive judgment hereafter. The former render our conceptions of the latter easy, and their reality probable. The *latter* is only *the same constitution*, more completely and perfectly carried on, displayed in a more extensive and illustrious manner.

We find that the objects of sense itself are admitted into the mind by degrees; our acquaintance with them is gradual, and advancing from the first, the very few and weak, notices we receive in infancy to new objects, new sensations and new improvements every day. Why then should it weaken our faith, or weaken the force of its objects on our practice, that the plan of the universe is not at once laid open before us, and all orders

S E R M O N I.

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orders and ranks of beings are not at once visible to our sight. We consider not, that if the objects of faith were brought within the verge of sense, they would have such a powerful, striking and overbearing power, as to exclude all virtue from our actions; there could be no reasoning upon them, no choice in regard to them. We consider not, that to *disbelieve* the reality of these things, must involve us in the greatest contradictions and absurdities.

To believe, that whilst every house has a builder, there is no one who *built all things*: to believe that no woman can forget her sucking child, and no father can be indifferent to the wants of his children; yet that the parent of the world neglects the creatures he has made; and he that formed us, shows us favour: to believe in a God who cannot want wisdom, power or goodness, being the source of all, and yet to suppose that he exercises no care, no government over us: to believe that he governs us, yet does not observe our actions; or that observing our actions, he does not approve the good, and disapprove the evil, so as to punish the latter and recompence the former: This is absurd: this is repugnant to every principle of reason, and every dictate of common sense—a contradiction to all the apprehensions of

our own minds—a contradiction to the general principles and reason of all men, and of all ages. So void, so entirely void of all absurdity is it, to suppose the things of another state, which we do not see, to be real and certain. And since these things may be as we apprehend ; so

Secondly. There is a *great variety of clear and strong proofs*, on which to build our faith in the invisible and future realities of another world. [It further serves to set forth the wisdom and reasonableness of a life governed by faith, not only that there is nothing impossible, nothing absurd in it : but that this faith is merely opposed to sense and enjoyment, not to reason and judgment. No ! faith is the submission of the mind to evidence, and the triumph of reason over the impressions and prejudices of sight. A judicious faith is the result of enquiry, of attention to argument and proof. The grand and leading principles of a religious persuasion and hope are founded on the most evident and obvious truths.]

The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. Not only the wonders of our own frame, the curious formation of our bodies and the nobler powers of the soul ;
but

but the least insect that moves and every spire of grafs, produceth the acknowledgment of a first cause, an Almighty Author of all things. Though we see not God himself, we behold his works and discern the marks of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, in the heavens above, in the world around us and in ourselves. Though at the close of life we do not see our fellow creatures summoned to the tribunal of the Universal Judge, and taking their trial for eternity: yet the difference between good and evil, between virtue and vice, is as plain as the difference between light and darkness, sweet and bitter; we are capable of choosing the one, and refusing the other; in innumerable instances, in the constitution of things, we have the evidence of sight and experience, that the tendency of goodness is to happiness, and of sin to misery; the practice of virtue is indeed always attended with self-approbation and hope; the practice of sin is followed with remorse and fear. This has all the appearance of our being accountable creatures. We are framed, as if we should undergo the scrutiny of the Divine Judgment. Though we do not see the other world, and the bar of God, we see and feel *what is necessarily previous thereto*; we see and feel the *preparations* for a future judgment and state: hence on the evidences arising from our own
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consciousness and the nature of the world, we firmly expect to give an account of ourselves to God, and to receive according to our deeds.

These objects of faith are set in a fuller, clearer, and more striking light by the gospel. *That* teaches us the sublimest truths relative to the Maker of the world. *That* makes the plainest, most animating and engaging discoveries of another life. *That* opens, to our gladdening contemplation, the schemes and plan of the Divine Government, the designs of infinite benevolence for the salvation of man, through all ages, from the beginning of the world. *That* reveals to us the character of JESUS CHRIST, brings us into a new relation, and leads us to a new set of duties, arising from the grace and authority of CHRIST JESUS.

And if the excellency of the discoveries, the reasonableness of the precepts and the dignity of the truths of the gospel; if their correspondence to the perfections of God and the state of man; if the amiable lustre they reflect on the character of God, and the light and joy they diffuse amongst a guilty and degenerate race; if the divine life of the author of our religion; if the purifying and ennobling tendency of his doctrine; if the
number,

number, greatness and variety of the works wrought by CHRIST and his apostles ; if the resurrection of our friend and law-giver from the dead ; if his ascension to heaven ; if the grant and effusion of supernatural gifts and endowments on the ministers of his religion, from himself in his exalted state ; if the testimony of twelve plain, honest and benevolent men, who gave up their own prejudices, views and gain ; who met poverty, disgrace, torture and death, in attesting the grand facts of the Christian scheme ; if the efficacy and success of the gospel, in the change of the religion, and the lives of men ; if the faith of history and the testimony of succeeding, corroborating that of former ages.—If any of one these arguments hath weight and force in it ; and especially, if when united together and all lending their separate authority, they form an harmony and sympathy of proofs, truly striking for their number, their agreement and their strength. Then it is not without evidence that we walk by faith. A persuasion of such truths so supported is wise and rational. Particularly when it is considered,

Thirdly. That there is a *vast, an infinite moment* in the objects of our faith. [Amidst the variety of objects that court our notice and attention, wisdom and reason require us to suit our regards

to

to their respective nature and excellence. Indeed, were the things of this world and of sense to be valued and pursued no farther than their own intrinsic worth and duration would justify ; but few thoughts, but a little care would be bestowed on them by a rational and immortal creature : and the neglect would be highly injurious to our present condition. The wise author of our frame, the Almighty Maker of the world hath so established the present constitution of things, that how deficient soever in real excellency sensible objects may appear to the judgment of a rational being, they strike on our minds so early, so continually accost us, enter in at so many avenues, leave such strong impressions, and are so interwoven with all the circumstances of our existence, and all the exigences of our state, that a total disregard of them is not less impossible ; than, if practicable, it would be high and bitter folly, They may ; they must be minded.

But amidst all our connections in this world, amidst all our cares for this life and the body ; let it be ever remembered, that we have souls and are connected with nobler objects.] There is a native worth, a solid, supreme and lasting value belonging to the invisible realities of a future state. We may appeal to you, Christians ; we may
may

may lodge the appeal with every man who will turn a sober thought to the subject, amidst the vast multitude of beings that inhabit universal space, is there any one, that can be likened unto GOD, or compared with the Most High? Amidst all the kind agents under GOD, who are the ministers of good to us; amidst all the long roll of benefactors and friends to mankind, whose names adorn the pages of history, can a *superior*, can an *equal* be found to JESUS CHRIST, for the purity of his character, for the sublimity of his instructions, for his generous services, for his large benefits, for his exalted dignity and universal empire? He tenders the offer, he has secured, the blessings of wisdom for the ignorant, of strength for the weak, of pardon for the guilty, and of life and immortality for the dying. To whom are we so much indebted? Whose name is good and glorious like his?

As to the *hopes and prospects* faith opens before us, how gracious and important! You are called to seek, and are encouraged to piety and virtue by the promise of all the dignity and bliss, your hearts can desire or God can give in a more perfect and durable state of existence. A judgment, from which there lies no appeal; a judgment, which will reach to our words and thoughts as
well

well as actions; where you cannot effect an escape, nor offer a bribe; where angels and men will be witnesses of our acquittal or disgrace; a judgment, which will decide our state and character for *eternity*; eternal death or eternal Heaven of glory and bliss; these objects, if any thing is solemn and weighty, these things are of *infinite* moment to us! and were the evidence for them much less than it is; yet they are so great in themselves, so much depends upon the belief of them; if they should prove true: it would be a point of wisdom and prudence, even on slender and less probable proofs to pay a serious regard to them. Their own weight would be sufficient to make up a defect of evidence. What influence then ought they to have upon us; when both the evidences for them are so numerous and strong; and their importance so great and eternal? Let nothing, Christians, move you away from so high an hope; let nothing betray you into a forgetfulness of so vast a concern.

Fourthly. This walking by faith, has the *best* *effect* *on* *our* *conduct* *and* *our* *happiness*. Knowledge, fortitude, prudence, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and universal charity, are the amiable, useful and divine habits; which the principles of faith raise and establish.

Do

Do you believe in GOD? You will own; that this faith directs, obliges and encourages you to be holy as he is holy, to be merciful as he is merciful, and as dear children to form your temper and life after the perfections of the Deity, the most lovely and perfect model of goodness and purity. Do you believe in the *final Judge* of the world; who without respect of persons will render to every man according to his works? What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness: this is the conclusion from such a principle which faith draws and fixes in the heart! Do you believe in the *Son of GOD*? This faith teaches and engages you to keep his commandments, to open your bosoms to the power of those grateful generous sentiments his dying friendship inspires; and to maintain your integrity, purity and holiness to the end, fired by the prospect of that immortal crown, he will appear from heaven to bestow.

Read the lives of the patriarchs, of the apostles and martyrs. Turn to the history of Abraham, of Joseph, of Daniel, of Moses, and of Jesus CHRIST, that illustrious pattern and leader on to the exercise and reward of faith. Or examine, sirs, your own lives, and survey your own actions; and say, how useful, how important you have found the influence of faith.

In

In your own experience, when the principles or faith are active and vigorous, steadily kept in view and firmly embraced, to what innocence, integrity and universal propriety and dignity of behaviour do they guide and animate the man? When faith is lively; the cares of life grow easy; its temptations lose their power to charm, or to terrify. For the prospects of the believer in God and CHRIST are wide and extensive: his desires pure and sublime: his hopes warm and bright: his resolutions bold and strong. He views all things in their connection with futurity: he converses with the celestial world: beholds the Deity as ever present, as always nigh to approve, befriend and bless him: and he is transported into eternity itself.]

The happiness that flows from faith is pure and solid. To be kept from fluctuating amidst all the uncertainties of life; not to be subject to the power of vain hopes and joys, and fears and sorrows no less vain; to meet the afflictions of life with fortitude, to improve its blessings by gratitude and to enjoy them with moderation; this is the happiness that prevails where faith prevails. And thine, O! divine principle, are the joys of a devout attachment to God the best of all beings, and to JESUS CHRIST the kind and powerful *Saviour*; the joys of devout confidence
and

and of good hopes beyond the grave; the joys of a triumph over death and of an everlasting recompence; these joys and pleasures are thine. With these joys are all the toils of faith soothed and its labours repayed: till a better and happier world will render its satisfactions perfect, and its consequences eternal!

So reasonable are the principles of faith; so great the evidences of their reality; so vast their importance; so valuable and so happy their influence; let us walk by faith and not by sight. When the being of a GOD, when the gospel and a judgment to come shall be proved to be chimeras and fables, matters of no weight in themselves and of no consequence to you; *then*, Christians, you may change the motives of your conduct, and with reason and safety let this world be your only care. But since things are so; are as they have been now represented, follow not a multitude in the impiety, ingratitude and folly of treating these things with indifference and contempt. The foundations of religion are laid too deep in the nature of things, and in the constitution of human nature to be overturned by a witty argument and profane jest. The importance of the objects of our faith is too great and real to be diminished by the example of those who are

be inconsiderate, or so daring as to forget and despise them.

“ My dependance on God, my interest in the
 “ salvation of the gospel, my accountability at
 “ the tribunal of God, and my concern in the
 “ consequences of that trial is the same, is infinite
 “ to me: though the many, or the great, may
 “ treat those things as nothing to *them*. It is only
 “ the want of evidence, or the want of importance
 “ can excuse my neglect of them. It will only
 “ expose my folly and endanger my happiness,
 “ if the example of others weighs more with me
 “ than the reason of things, the force of argument,
 “ and the concerns of an eternal state.”

Whatever others do, let us walk by faith. To
 assist and invigorate our faith, let us frequently
 retire and meditate on the wondrous scenes faith
 displays before us. “ Every Christian has another
 “ world to which he belongs, and in which he
 “ should live and converse, besides this which he
 “ is born into, and shares with the rest of man-
 “ kind. Into this world he should often step aside:
 “ it is not at such a distance from him, but that he
 “ can do it in a moment by only forgetting the world
 “ about him, and strongly turning the eye of his
 “ mind inward. Here let his thoughts dwell for
 “ a time;

“ a time, pass with wonder and delight from one
 “ object to another: now entertaining himself with
 “ the perfections of God; now with the virtues and
 “ offices of the Redeemer, his past sufferings, his
 “ present glory; now with the privileges of good
 “ men in this life, then with their happiness
 “ in the life to come; now with one doctrine of
 “ Christianity, then with another, and some times
 “ with the certainty and divine excellence of the
 “ whole religion.”

Let these themes employ some of our thoughts every day. But particularly let us be so wise, as to seize the leisure and composure of the Lord's Day, to think more deeply on them in private, to enlarge our acquaintance with them by reading, and to improve the opportunity hereby afforded us, if not to be informed, yet to *be reminded* ourselves, and to remind others of their certainty and importance by a serious attendance on the public instructions and devotions of the day. Above all, let us consider what ought to be the conversation of those, who believe in the gracious and almighty Maker of the world, in the truth of the gospel, and in a judgment to come. Such, so pure and devout, so good and sober let our lives and

* Mr. Grove. See his Works, Vol. IX. p. 144, 145.

temper be every day, and all the day long. Let the laws of GOD and of the eternal world be our constant guide.

Thus, my friends, fight the good fight of faith: finish your course with integrity and joy. And the glorious, immortal prize will be yours. It is now yours by the near prospect of it. Soon, soon as the tale of human life is told, it will be yours by possession; by a certain, triumphant and eternal possession. *Amen.*

SER-

S E R M O N III.

The Happiness and Improvement of a pious
Descent.

2 TIM. i. 5.

WHEN I CALL TO REMEMBRANCE THE UN-
FEIGNED FAITH THAT IS IN THEE, WHICH
DWELT FIRST IN THY GRANDMOTHER LOIS;
AND THY MOTHER EUNICE; AND I AM PER-
SUADED THAT IN THEE ALSO.

AMONGST the other converts, with which
the ministry and preaching of the apostle
Paul were blessed, none was more eminent, either
for his virtues or the station which he filled in the
Christian church, than was Timothy. His mind,
from his childhood, had been tinctured with pious
sentiments, and from the earliest period of life he
had formed an intimate acquaintance with the
scriptures of the Old Testament.

[It is supposed*, that as he was a native of Lyfia, he had, at that place, been an hearer of the Apostle and a witness of his sufferings. The religious turn of his mind and his knowledge of the scriptures were excellent preparatives for the reception of the Christian faith, as both disposing him to attend to the preaching of it, and qualifying him to judge of the proofs of its truth derived from the ancient prophecies. The fact accordingly was, that he became, when very young, a believer in CHRIST, and soon we find him distinguished amongst the Christians. Acts xvi. 1.

The promising endowments and capacities for usefulness which he discovered, and the honourable character he bore amongst the brethren, recommended him to the peculiar notice of the holy Apostle; who took him to be his companion and assistant in preaching the gospel, and set him apart to the ministerial office. Timothy fully answered the great expectations that had been entertained concerning him, and became a faithful and useful friend to his apostolic patron. His name stands with that of the Apostle in several of the epistles, and two valuable pieces of Paul's writings were expressly addressed to him.]

* Dr. Benson.

The

The foundation of his future eminence and usefulness in the Christian church, it is more than intimated in the text, was laid in the graces of his ancestors, and in the influence of their care and manners upon his young mind. His father was a devout Gentile : his mother and grandmother were Jewesses : they were both persons of exemplary piety, and were converts to the Christian faith.

From them he had received the knowledge of the Jewish religion, and their example he followed in embracing the Christian. The pattern they had set before him, and the instructions they had given him, were not lost ; but left deep and lasting impressions of piety and faith on his heart. So that the same religious principles, by which they had been distinguished, dwelt in his breast and actuated his conduct. “ When I call to remembrance,” says the Apostle, “ the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice : and I am persuaded that in thee also.”

These words naturally lead us to reflect on the honour of being descended from pious ancestors—on the happy influence of a religious education—how laudable it is to imitate, nay surpass the

virtues of parents—and how delightful it is to the Christian minister to see the virtues of his aged friends copied by the rising generation. These are the observations I would endeavour to illustrate.

First. It is an honour to be descended from pious and worthy ancestors. This is a point, which doth not require any laboured proof. If there be any thing excellent, praise worthy and of good report in righteousness; if the memory of the just be blessed, and “a good name be better than precious ointment;” the virtues of the good must cast a glory on their descendants. “Virtue,” saith the Roman satyrift and poet, “is the true and sole nobility*.” This hath been, indeed, the sentiments of all ages, that posterity derives honour from the worth and merit of their ancestors.

[The unlettered, uncultivated Indian feels the force of this consideration. He exults in the prowess of his parent; in the courage with which he fought, or in the swiftness with which he hunted; in the fortitude with which he met and endured the dangers and difficulties of the field, or

* —Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus.

Juvenal, Sat. viii. ver. 20.

of the chase. The virtues of their remote ancestors have often been the subject of national triumph and from age to age the burden of their songs.]

The Jews were remarkable for their boasts in the virtues of the patriarchs and in the faith of their father Abraham. This fed their pride and raised their confidence. In the low and humble stations of life men derive from this source a kind of self-satisfaction and an elevation of spirit. You will often hear them speak, with exultation, of a virtuous descent, and appear to grow great, in their own eyes, if they can appeal to others, that their parents, though poor, were honest. These facts prove it to be an allowed principle, that it is honourable to come from good ancestors, that the fame and reputation of doing good doth not die with us; but will be a precious inheritance to our children.

If the appeal be made to ourselves, who doth not consider it as an happiness to have descended from pious and valuable parents? Do we not look upon the reputation and glory, which their goodness secured to them, as, in some measure, our own? And are not mankind, in general, disposed, in consequence of such descent, to view

us in a more favourable light and to look on us with affection?

What a strong and engaging motive should this be with parents to maintain an holy character, and to follow after exemplary righteousness!—What a ground of pleasing, devout and grateful reflexion is it, if any of us be able to say; “My progenitors were devout, upright and useful in their lives and conversation: an honour to human nature and ornaments to the gospel of Christ.”

Secondly. We here see the happy influence of a religious education. [Timothy was, in a great measure, formed, to the excellent and useful character he supported, by the early instructions his pious mother and grandmother instilled into his mind and by the force of the holy examples they set before him. The unfeigned faith, he discovered, first dwelt in them: and their holy care was the happy means of communicating to *his* heart those good impressions they felt on their own.]

The wise man lays it down as a maxim, which is evidently just and generally holds true: “Train
“ up

“up a child in the way, in which he should go,
“and when he is old, he will not depart from
“it.” Our experience, as well as the reason of
the thing, confirms the truth of this remark.
Let us look round our religious societies, do they
not generally consist of those who have been trained
up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord:
of children who have succeeded to their parents,
as witnesses for God and truth in the world?
How few, in general, are added to us from disso-
lute and irreligious families.

Sometimes, it is true, the warmth of the passions,
the temptations of life and the manners of the
world counteract and defeat the tendency of edu-
cation. Neither the instructions, nor examples,
nor remonstrances, nor tears, nor authority, nor
affection of parents are sufficient to detain some
in the paths of wisdom and piety. But, when
example is united with precept, gentleness is
blended with authority, and zeal tempered with
wisdom, a religious education, according to the
natural course of things and the general method
of divine providence, is the most probable means
of disposing the rising generation to seriousness
and virtue; and it affords the fairest prospect of
success.

Thus

Thus succeeded the pious care of Lois and Eunice: and perhaps, in all ages, "some of the "worthiest and most venerable ministers, the "church of CHRIST hath been able to boast of, "have had reason to bless God for those early "impressions which were made upon their minds "by the religious instructions of persons in the "same relation*."

Powerful encouragement arises from hence to animate the pious labours of parents. Those whom their care and example are the happy means of forming to holiness and virtue, will carry on the same important and benevolent work, of sowing the seeds of truth and piety in the hearts of *their* descendants; and *they* again in theirs; and so the blessed work will be carried on from generation to generation. New harvests of holiness and virtue will arise; and unborn ages will derive benefit from the instructions and examples of the present, and of the last age. Parents may rejoice in the immediate effects of their holy endeavours; but their imagination can not fully paint all the scenes of future virtue and bliss, which may originate with their labours and be traced back to them.

* Dr. Doddridge's Family Expositor, in loc.

Could Lois or Eunice foresee how extensive, useful and excellent a character was rising up under their hands, when they were instilling into the child Timothy the principles of divine knowledge? Could they foresee how many would be formed by his preaching to faith and holiness: and what an influence the object of their affectionate care would have on the progress of that glorious kingdom of the MESSIAH, which they, with other devout Jews were waiting for with pious and ardent hope?

It is not indeed the honour or felicity of every parent to train up, or of every family to produce a Timothy: but surely the instance before us is sufficient to teach us, that the usefulness of our instructions and example may repay our labours with a richer recompence than our hearts can conceive. Animated by this thought, be persuaded, Christians, to command your children and your household after you to know the way of the LORD, to fear his name and to keep his precepts.

Thirdly. It is commendable in children to attend to the instructions and imitate the virtues of their pious parents. Paul speaks to Timothy in the way of praise, when he says that he was "persuaded, that the same faith dwelt in him,"
which

“which had dwelt in his grandmother Lois and
 “his mother Eunice.” It was the dying charge
 of David to Solomon: to “know the God of his
 “fathers, and to serve him with a perfect heart
 “and a willing mind.” The wise man addresses
 to his pupil the like exhortation: “My son, hear
 “the instructions of thy father and forsake not
 “the law of thy mother.” And again: “My
 “son, keep thy father’s commandment, and for-
 “sake not the law of thy mother.” To the same
 purpose speaks a Grecian moralist and orator:
 “It is a shame, that painters should copy beau-
 “tiful animals, and children not imitate their
 “virtuous ancestors. Let it be a maxim with
 “you, that a wrestler ought not more vigorously
 “to strive with his antagonist, than you should vie
 “with your father in his pursuits.”

The principle, upon which such exhortations
 are founded, is this: that the enjoyment of such
 precepts and examples is an obligation to a
 suitable improvement, which can not be violated
 without great folly and an aggravation of guilt.
 Strangely insensible must be that mind, which
 can not perceive and admire the beauty of good
 examples! Strangely stubborn must be that

heart,

heart; which can resist the force of early and repeated instructions ! In such a case, how many advantages must be abused ! How many restraints broken through ! How many impressions in favour of goodness effaced ! How many powerful inducements withstood and persuasions resisted ! The descendants of pious parents can not perish for lack of knowledge, nor fall into the snare of vice for want of being warned of their danger. If they are not like to their valuable ancestors, or if instead of being like to them, their temper and behaviour are directly the reverse of theirs, they can not deviate from their example without exposing themselves to peculiar reproach and infamy.

Far be it from any, here, to subject themselves to such censure ! Let a more consistent part be your pursuit. Shew yourselves the worthy posterity of worthy ancestors. Their reputation and glory will thus become justly yours. Were the virtues they exemplified amiable and excellent ; what can be more commendable than to seek to be clothed with the same beauties, to be enriched with the same ornaments of character ? Were the instructions they communicated just principles of truth and powerful motives to a virtuous conduct ; what can be more wise than to hold them

sacred,

sacred, and to regard them as the rules of behaviour? This is to express a proper esteem for the advantages we have enjoyed : this is to make such an improvement of them, as will be of lasting benefit to us, the foundation of increasing usefulness here and of eternal happiness hereafter. Thus will you acquire a worth of character, and, in your turn, cast a glory on those who may arise from you. I observe,

Fourthly. That it is proper and commendable to excel our ancestors in knowledge, piety and virtue. Timothy is justified and even commended for choosing the principles of true religion, though he was not led to it by the example of his father. His mother and grandmother afforded him a pattern of unfeigned faith, and believed in CHRIST before him : but he greatly improved on the instructions they communicated to him, and on the example they had set before him, by becoming an eminent preacher of the gospel, and distinguishing himself by his zeal and activity in the Christian cause. His pursuits and attainments were not limited to the first acquisitions of knowledge and virtue.

[No dictate of reason, no precept of scripture forbids men becoming more knowing or more righteous

righteous than their ancestors. The design of education is not to cramp the powers of the soul and to restrain its aspirations after excellence: but to communicate the elements of knowledge, to give a right direction to the passions and desires, and to open and exercise the faculties of the mind, that they may be capable of future and greater exertions.]

Good men have their prejudices, errors and faults: and shall any reverence for their virtues betray us into a resemblance to them in what was weak and blameworthy? Children often possess more judgment, genius and capacity than did their worthy ancestors; are sometimes, naturally, of a more amiable temper; and are frequently in situations more favourable to every improvement: and are these advantages to be lost in a blind deference to the instructions they first received, and the examples to which they have been chiefly accustomed? When we become capable of judging concerning truth and duty we should certainly use our own reason, and modestly bring the principles and practices of even our forefathers to the test.

“If,” to use the words of a good writer, “there is any defect of knowledge in those to whom

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“anyare obliged, they may endeavour to be better
 “informed in the principles of religion, and the
 “grounds of them. There may be occasion for
 “them to be more open and explicit in the pro-
 “fession of religion, than those that went before
 “them. They may aim at the strictest regard to
 “the will of God, and excel in moderation and
 “charity towards others. If they, by whom they
 “have been brought up, appear to them morose
 “and severe, and to stretch their authority beyond
 “the bounds of reason; nothing hinders, but they
 “may aim at escaping that mistake, and exceed
 “them in mildness and gentleness. There can be
 “no good reason assigned, why children should
 “not be better than their parents, if they are able:
 “still preserving a humble and dutiful respect to
 “a superior relation, which is a necessary part
 “of true goodness, without which they cannot
 “excel*.” Once more,

Fourthly. It is a pleasure to the Christian
 minister to see the virtues of his aged friends
 copied by the rising generation. The text assigns
 the reason why the Apostle remembered Timothy,
 with affection, in his prayers, and returned thanks

• Dr. Lardner's Works, 8vo. ed. Vol. X. p. 201.
 Or Sermons, Vol. I. Sermon VIII. p. 175. To which dis-
 course this sermon is indebted for several useful hints.

to God for him with fervor and affection. "I
 "thank God," says he, "that without ceasing
 "I have remembrance of thee in my prayers
 "night and day, when I called to remembrance
 "the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt
 "first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother
 "Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also."

It is evident that the Apostle here passeth an
 eulogium upon his young friend with a sensible
 delight in the virtues of his character. The
 Apostle John, in his letter to the Elect Lady,
 expresseth the like satisfaction in the conduct of
 her descendants. "I rejoiced greatly," saith he,
 "that I find of thy children walking in truth."

What pious minister, can it be supposed, doth
 not enter into these sentiments? Affection to our
 aged friends must incline us to rejoice, when *their*
 expectations are answered and *their* hearts are
 filled with joy. The comfort of *our own* future
 ministrations is intimately connected with the
 choice and pursuits of the rising generation. Our
 friends, in advanced life, are successively removing
 from their station of service and activity here to
 the land of darkness and rest, from their labours
 to their reward: we are often called to pay the
 last tribute of respect and affection and to drop

the tear of friendship over their graves : and can it be conceived to be a matter of indifference to us, whether any succeed to their labours ; whether their virtues live again in their offspring ; whether the important services they rendered to the cause of truth and goodness are carried on by their descendants ; and whether the intercourses of friendship and affection with them, which contributed so much to the felicity of our lives, be renewed with their children ?

Let children rise up in the room of their parents, our sorrows are soothed ; the loss, we have sustained, is made up to us ; our sphere of activity and service is not left vacant : but our labours are enlivened and animated by new encouragements ; new prospects of success and usefulness open to us.

But, though these considerations may weigh with us, a more generous principle prompts the Christian minister, in this case, to rejoice. The cause, for which he is an advocate, is a public cause. In proportion as the principles of genuine religion are adopted by the rising generation ; in proportion as they imitate the virtues, the probity, benevolence and piety of their valuable
pro-

progenitors, they will serve the church: they will serve the world: they will be blessings to whole families, to whole neighbourhoods, and even to a whole nation. The good man is the useful man, the friend of others, and the benefactor of mankind. He can not have the feelings, he can not deserve the name of the Christian minister, who doth not see with joy and gladness the children of his friends walking in the truth; when it is a scene so pregnant with blessings to the respective circles in which they move.

Or let the minister extend his views forward; let him imagine, that the moment is approaching which will gather the succeeding generations of men to their fathers; and let him anticipate the time, the solemn day, when fathers and children, when ancestors and descendants shall all appear before the tribunal of CHRIST; under these views and prospects is it not a ground of delightful reflexion, a cause of benevolent pleasure, to think, that they who were partakers of the same unfeigned faith will be partakers of the same unspeakable, incorruptible and eternal glory? In this expectation every generous affection is gratified. Love to our present and gratitude to the

memory of our deceased friends unite to kindle and improve our joy in the prospect.

Let me now conclude this subject in an affectionate address to the younger part of this society. During the course of my ministry here, several worthy and respectable persons have finished their course. You and the world would support my attestations, were I to speak of their unfeigned faith, of their probity, of their generosity, of their sobriety and of their attachment to the cause of Christian liberty. But there is no occasion to enter into particular eulogiums, or to call over their names. You remember their virtues and reflect with pleasure that you had such ancestors.

How much doth it concern you, if you would express your gratitude to heaven, that gave you such friends; if you would preserve the honour of your families; if you would make up to the world and to the church the loss of your valuable friends; if you would duly improve the distinguishing advantages derived from their instructions and examples; if you would partake of the reputation and esteem, in which their names are held; if either, much more if all these considerations have

have any weight, how much doth it concern you to cultivate the like unfeigned faith which they displayed.

Be persuaded to review the reflexions we have now made, and to apply them to yourselves.—Yours is the honour of having descended from pious and worthy persons. Oh! let not your degeneracy tarnish the glory of your descent. The influence of a pious education is happy and useful: do not betray such insensibility or perverseness, as to resist its gentle restraints and defeat its useful tendency. It is praiseworthy to imitate, nay to surpass, those who have gone before us: this is to transcribe their excellencies into our own lives and to make ourselves real heirs to their good name. Recollect those valuable progenitors, my friends, who marched on in the road to the heavenly Zion with unshaken steadiness: “they finished their
“race with joy and their happiness is fixed beyond
“the power of change. With one voice they call
“upon you to follow them in their illustrious
“career of devotion, integrity and beneficence.—
“They call upon you to mount, by the same
“steps which they have done, to the same heights
“of dignity and felicity. They animate, they
“urge, they beseech you to join their august
D 4 “assembly

“affessibly and to become partakers of their fal-
 “vation*.” Let them not urge and animate you
 in vain.

In life practise the same probity and benefi-
 cence. In religion make and support the same
 profession of faith in CHRIST and the same atten-
 dance upon Christian institutions. Be the same
 advocates for truth and piety. Your virtues and
 piety will communicate their influence to future
 generations, and in your posterity will arise again
 the graces and worth of your ancestors.

Shall I be permitted to add one consideration
 more, that thus your minister's joy and thank-
 giving will abound? His predecessors, on another
 day, will appear before the throne of CHRIST,
 accompanied with an happy number of persons,
 who, under the divine blessing on their ministra-
 tions and labours, were formed, in younger life,
 to holiness and virtue. They saw the generations,
 to whom they preached, followers of the faith and
 righteousness of those who had gone before them.
 Shall it be the distressing lot, the peculiar infelicity
 of your present minister to see religion die with

• Dr. Kippis.

his

his aged friends : to bury them, but not to add to the church from their posterity such as will be ornaments to the gospel and be saved in the day of the LORD ? He hopes, he entreats, he solicits for better things from you : that you would give yourselves to the LORD by the bonds of the Christian profession, and to this society by the ties of Christian worship and communion : and that you would walk worthy of the LORD, unto all well pleasing. Let him therefore conclude this discourse with the pathetic words of the Apostle ; “ if there be any bowels and mercies “ fulfil ye our joy.” *Amen.*

SER-

S E R M O N III.

Youth exhorted to seek the Favour of God
and Man.

LUKE ii. 52.

AND JESUS INCREASED IN WISDOM AND STA-
TURE, AND IN FAVOUR WITH GOD AND MAN.

IT is the use of history, whether sacred or profane, not only to lead us back into the transactions of past ages: but also to hold forth such a faithful picture of men and manners; as may at once instruct, warn and admonish us. Here we see wisdom and folly realized; the mind is alarmed with the misery and shame into which this man fell; and it feels the animating attractive force of that man's goodness and bliss. The springs of the human heart are laid open, and we see the progress and operation of those causes which exalt or degrade man. But whatever advantage can result from the study of history; the Sacred History bids fair to produce them all:
and

and for its bulk, it furnishes out a larger variety of extraordinary events, signal characters, and great examples; than are to be met with in any other. The consideration of its divine authority and its connection with the scheme of Revelation set aside, *this* should recommend it to our regard.

Amongst the names preserved here, that of JESUS CHRIST, separately from his extraordinary character and mission, is most distinguished. And the point of view, in which our text exhibits him, is not the least remarkable and instructive circumstance that relates to his life and character.—
 “And JESUS increased in wisdom and stature,
 “and in favour with God and man.”] This is recorded of our divine master, to intimate that by his early attention to the pursuit of wisdom, he laid the foundation of that noble superstructure of amiable, excellent and perfect virtue: which afterwards so illustriously adorned his life, and has made the memory of his name so precious and honourable down to the present age:—and to intimate, that hereby mankind were prejudiced in his favour, and led to form engaging and worthy conceptions of his character; and were prepared to attend with great candour and patience to him, when he opened the nature of his office and the
 bene-

benevolent purposes he was sent into the world to execute.

This excellent character of the young Jesus, has a powerful tendency to strike the minds of children and youth with esteem and delight, and to fire their breasts with emulation. Oh! that this day may see so happy an effect produced by it! I will now make it the subject of my present serious and free address to you, my young hearers; being ambitious, under God, of forming your minds to the resemblance of CHRIST; and of fixing your hearts in the early love of the Deity and the pursuit of wisdom. You will, my dear friends, be serious and candid. May that gracious Being, who smiles on every period of life, and who has formed our hearts susceptible of every moral impression, fix your attention; and and write on your minds, in lasting characters, the instructions of this day!—Whilst I would endeavour to kindle, in your bosoms, a desire to obtain the favour of God and man: and would earnestly recommend the pursuit of wisdom, as the as the only means to secure it. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

First,

First, Let it be observed from the words, that *the love and pursuit of wisdom* is the most likely and effectual method to secure the divine approbation and the esteem of man. Not mere knowledge, much less subtlety and cunning in managing secular affairs, is meant by wisdom in the scriptures. An understanding to discern between good and bad ; an understanding to know how to appear and behave in life with dignity, virtue and usefulness is wisdom in the style of the sacred books. This is at once the most beneficial and important science. Its beginning is with the fear of God, and to depart from evil is understanding. Religion, genuine religion, yeilding the fruits of righteousness, is wisdom. Its rules are the best maxims ; its happiness the worthiest object of our aim. This wisdom is clothed with the truest charms ; and to the pursuit of it the best advantages are annexed. You have a just, as well as a fine and animating description of them in the third chapter of the Book of Proverbs ; which let me recommend to your serious and frequent perusal.

Would you be determined by the sentiments and example of others, none can be more decisive and forcible than that of the young Jesus. In
this

this wisdom he advanced as he grew in stature : as he ripened in years, his mind unfolded itself ; the faculties of his soul were strengthened, and improved by a progress in religious knowledge and by more enlarged views.

The historian relates an instance of our Lord's love of wisdom, and of his proficiency in it.— When he was but twelve years of age, he was found sitting among the Jewish doctors, hearing them and asking them questions ; and all were astonished at his understanding and answers. Such a tender youth diligent to cultivate his reasoning powers, and extend his views by a growing acquaintance with the most important subjects, could not but be acceptable to the God of wisdom, who has made his intelligent creatures wiser than the beasts of the field : so inquisitive a disposition could not but secure the love and esteem of man.

But it was not this alone that secured to the young Jesus the favour of God and man ; it was *the effect* of this knowledge in forming his temper and behaviour : it was the amiable and excellent influence of his knowledge, cherishing every pious, kind and humane affection ; which endeared him to others, and rendered him the object

object of the divine love. The account of what our SAVIOUR said and did, before he entered on the stage of public life, is very brief; yet, in it, brief as it is, we are able to trace out his piety, modesty and virtue.

His answer to his mother in the temple was an indication of the exalted notions he entertained of his station; and of an ardent as well as early bent of soul to fulfil the will of God. "Wist you not that I must be about my father's business?" The account we have of his being subject to his parents, not only shews his filial obedience and submission; but beautifully illustrates his humility and the entire subjection of his own desires to the will of God. As he neither took occasion from his superior wisdom, nor extraordinary designation, to set himself above the parental authority, though his parents were persons of a mean and illiterate station: nor elated with the prospect of the high and sacred character he was to be invested with, did he rush forward with the impetuosity and vanity, natural to his early years, into his public ministry and life; but modestly and contentedly waited, till the time, appointed by God, for his appearance openly arrived. These things put together, point out what were the signal qualities and the attractive

attractive virtues, which adorned and ennobled the earliest years of our master's life; which won the affection of man, and drew on him the approbation of God.

Let your minds dwell on this fair model! View the young Jesus, or imagine you see him acting under a strong and lively sense of the beauty, excellency and reasonableness of religious virtue; and from the influence of a comprehensive acquaintance with its nature, obligations and branches, discharging with regularity, constancy and cheerfulness all its duties. See his mind opening and his understanding advancing to a state of maturity and vigour; almost before the intelligent principle begins to shew itself in others. See with what veneration and awe towards the Great God, *his* soul was filled; with what love and gratitude *his* bosom glowed. See him by the daily exercises of devotion kindling in his bosom every pious affection; and with the fervor of religion, adoring, praising and supplicating his heavenly father. Behold him receiving, with meekness and delight, the instructions of his parents; active to do their will and hastening to execute the unfinished command, whilst the words were yet in their lips.— See him adorned in his conversation with the

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native charms of purity, innocence and modesty; affable and meek, humble, courteous and kind to all. See these lovely virtues adding an amiableness, a beauty and grace to his whole deportment and character.

Does not this faint, this imperfect delineation of his moral temper raise some agreeable emotions in our bosoms? Does it not beget our esteem and awaken our emulation? I hope it does; I pray it may! Let me, my young friends, propose this example to you. Think on the worth and beauty of this character. Think how amiable you would appear, were it your own! Think, whether it cannot become your own.— Try to make it so. To this purpose give a meek and honest attention to the following hints and admonitions.

I would charge, I would intreat you to study religion, its natural obligations and the enforcements it has received from Christianity. Study the nature, perfections and works of God: study the principles, truths and precepts of the gospel: study its evidences and grounds: study your own temper, dispositions and powers: know what you are, and what you are made for.

No

No one is made for himself; let no one venture to live to himself. If we are by providence fixed in the *lower* stations; our masters and superiors have a claim to our industry, faithfulness and honesty: hereby we shall not only maintain ourselves; but benefit them, and benefit the public. If we move in *higher* ranks, our servants, dependents and labourers have a claim to our equity, protection and kindness. In every situation something is due from us to our family, to our friends and to those with whom we are more nearly connected. Something is due to the neighbourhood and civil or political community we are allied to; something is due from us to the world, and to the Christian church. Every talent and opportunity for doing good to either we enjoy, is a trust reposed in us; and for which we are accountable before the tribunal of the universal parent and governor. Do not, I beseech you then; do not make it the principle object of your wishes, how you may pass through life with the most ease, elegance or pleasure; or how you may get most money; but how you may do the most good; how you may pass through life in your respective stations, most virtuously and usefully. Study to live to God, and to live to man: let this be your aim; let nothing be regarded above or like to this. This is wisdom.

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And let every particular precept and maxim of wisdom have its proper place and weight. Reverence, obey and love God. The greatest are not independent of the Supreme Being; and the youngest have lived long enough to taste the goodness of the parent and friend of all. Devoutly worship him day by day. Take not his name in vain. Dare not pollute your lips with the profane oath.

Behave with dutiful submission, with affection and respect to your parents and superiors.

Be lowly minded; let modesty and humility give a lustre, grace and ornament to your whole deportment.

Be bold to speak the truth, dare not tell a lie.

Attain to a dignity of mind, cultivate a relish for the manly exercises of reflexion and wise discourse.

Be sober: be chaste. Be not among wine-bibbers, or among riotous eaters of flesh. Shun, by all means shun the path of the strange woman: for a whore is a deep ditch, and her steps take hold of hell. Shun every approach of such evil: avoid every incentive that would lead you to violate the laws

laws of purity. Abstain from all fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

Guide all your affairs with discretion, and discretion will preserve you.

And lastly, be pitiful; be courteous. Let the dumb animals feel your mercies; let all who know you, taste your benevolence; let your charity be as extensive as the universe. Cherish the most tender, friendly, humane sentiments for all: rejoice with them who rejoice; weep with them who weep: banish, forever banish from your hearts all the seeds of the malignant passions, anger, malice, envy and revenge. Be merciful, be meek, be of a forgiving disposition. Love peace; follow the things which make for peace, and as much as possible, live in peace with all men. In a word, above all things put on charity: let it have its extensive, its generous, its warm, its delightful influence over all your affections and passions. Let this be the spring of your social conduct.

Let me persuade you to esteem and practise these lessons of wisdom. This is the way to the favour of God, and the esteem of man: which reminds me that in the

Second place, I am to open this motive to the early pursuit of wisdom ; and to try to awaken, in your bosoms, a desire to gain the love of man, and the approbation of the Deity.

1. This pursuit of wisdom and practice of virtue, will secure to us the love and esteem of man. Piety and goodness have charms to sooth the savage breast : they strike, they delight them who in their own practice are abandoned to iniquity, and command their approbation. They address all the feelings of human nature. Conscience, the moral sense, gratitude, love and shame, all these affections and principles are on the side of virtue, and plead its cause with every man.

But when piety and goodness direct the choice and conduct of youth ; they shine with peculiar lustre and wear peculiar graces. They are agreeable to the natural modesty, tenderness, curiosity, and flexibility of childhood and youth. They add a dignity, sedateness and wisdom to an age most exposed to giddiness, folly and amusement. They prevent any bad principles and affections from taking root : or if any should have gained admission, hereby they are easily checked and soon cut off. And they afford such delightful prospects, that the young persons actuated by them will grow
up

up to usefulness and honour in life : early piety and goodness are attended with such advantages ; that the subjects of their power become amiable in the eyes of all. Let this then induce you, my friends, to revere, love and practise piety and virtue.

Your tender minds can not be indifferent to the love of others. The heart with youthful vigour warm, pants for glory, honour and praise. Ambition and a thirst for superiority and victory is one of the first passions which discovers itself.— How do children contend for the triumph with their toys and plays ! With what joy does the heart beat ; what pleasure sits in the countenance of the youth, who is come off victor in a task ; or who, by a particular action, has secured the plaudit of his parent or tutor ! As we advance in life, nobler views present themselves ; more worthy and excellent methods of superiority fire our youthful emulation. Let us thirst for the glory arising from a progress in virtue, and continual improvement in wisdom and holiness. Let me inspire you with an ambition for that esteem, to which virtue gives the surest, firmest title ; a title, its enemies cannot dispute.

And what can afford you so good a prospect of comfort and success in future life, as the

approbation and love of your fellow creatures.—

You are entering on a stage of action, in which you will meet many difficulties to be encountered; many obstacles to be surmounted: in which there is great danger of making a false step; and to go through which with credit, usefulness and innocence, you stand in need of the advice of those who have gone before you. Secure the favour of men by the practice of religious virtue, you will gain them for your friends. You may indulge the expectation of their advice, council and assistance: they will feel a generous pleasure in doing every kind office for you: they will wish to see you do well in the world, and they will contribute their utmost to it. Your interest then calls on you to pursue religious wisdom, and obey its dictates: and permit me to recommend and urge it from a strong desire of seeing you happy. I pray God your heart may be fixed for religion and virtue! But there is a nobler motive behind. For,

2. This is the way to the favour of God. [It is certain, there is a God; a Being of all holiness, purity and perfection. It is no less certain, that he approves holiness, and delights in the righteous. Must not excellency, beauty and perfection be acceptable to the source of all? Can a Being, who

who is infinitely good, be indifferent to goodness, wherever he discerns it? Goodness, the most amiable and excellent thing in the world must attract his love : and, when it is exhibited with peculiar lustre ; when the circumstances, attending the practice of it, reflect additional worth and beauty on it, his esteem for it will grow higher. This recommends to the divine regard the goodness of the young.]

The commands of God's word, to "remember our Creator in the days of our youth, and to flee youthful lusts," are a testimony from himself of his peculiar esteem for pious youth. The encomiums bestowed on them in the scriptures, are encouraging monuments of the same truth. What signal favours, what extraordinary honours attended JESUS CHRIST : when his early ripened into the exalted wisdom and benevolent actions of his manly years and public life ! When Solomon at his first entrance on the scene of empire and government and warm with youthful vigour, made wisdom his choice and prayer : God not only gave him wisdom in a superior measure, but super-added the grant of wealth and honour to an eminent degree, with the promise of long life on the condition of his obedience*. This shews

* See 1 Kings, chap. iii.

that

that in the judgment of the great God, we can not make a more worthy and amiable choice than that of wisdom. You here see, with what high esteem and applause from God, his prayer was attended; and how generous and ample are the tokens of the divine favour.

Is not this a most animating consideration to engage you to early piety and goodness? What consideration can be more important? The approbation of God is the highest pitch and utmost perfection of all glory. The worth of glory and honour must rise in proportion to the wisdom and dignity of the person by whom it is conferred.— Among ourselves, is not the good opinion of the worthiest and wisest most coveted? What glory and dignity and honour must then result from the approbation of the Supreme Being, the all-perfect and unerring Judge! It must as much exceed that of man, as divine perfections exceed human infirmities.

Glorious in itself: it is equally beneficial in its consequences. When God is your friend, and heaven smiles upon you: in that you will enjoy all the springs of comfort, all the sources of safety and bliss. This will secure you the protection of his power, the guidance of his wisdom, and the supplies

supplies of his goodness. Whatever is for our true benefit, in such a case, we shall obtain : and it is no less a consoling and gladdening thought, whatever would really hurt us, though we, through our ignorance, might be apt to desire it, shall be withheld from us. What need we fear, when God is for us ? How can the prospect of the future scenes of life dismay us, when we know that the Almighty is with us ? Can we not with cheerfulness, calmness and joy, look forward to and anticipate the various vicissitudes of this stage of action, we are entering upon ; under the conviction that the Supreme Being is on our side, and has a high regard for us ? Oh ! my friends, nothing can afford the comfort, that this consideration will yield us.

Put this in competition with all the gaieties, follies and pleasures of youth ; they will not only vanish in the view ; but the thought of giving a loose to them will be rejected with abhorrence. And if we carry our thoughts forward to the last awful period of things, what tongue can describe, what imagination can conceive the inexpressible, the transcendently glorious honours, that will crown the head of the pious youth ; and of the saint, whose virtuous, holy life has begun and kept pace with his rational life ? With what joy and exul-

exultation, with what ecstacy and satisfaction will the breast overflow; when our plaudit shall be pronounced by the voice of God: and when the host of heaven shall catch the sound, and the encomium shall be resounded through the whole assembled world! Can the ambition of either men or angels, rise higher than this? Let not our ambition take up with any thing short of this. I trust your souls are too noble and generous to rest contented without the applause of God! Let me propose this honour to your choice: and refuse it if you can, with the approbation of your reason. To your *reason* I appeal. I leave the matter *there*.

To draw to a close. The road to honour and happiness has been pointed out to you. You have heard, how important it is to pursue religious wisdom. Do not hesitate in the affair. What reason is there for delay and doubt? Keep your eyes on that perfect model of the dispositions, views and recompence of wisdom, JESUS CHRIST, our once dying, but now exalted friend.

He came into our world to teach us the truest wisdom: his gospel contains the best rules of wisdom, and the best motives to engage our choice of it. And in his life, all the principles
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of a devout, virtuous and useful conduct, were exemplified to the greatest perfection and beauty. It was the encomium of his earliest years; that he increased in wisdom and stature; and in favour with God and man. Follow this pattern of wisdom: and deserve the same encomium.

What will insure to you greater happiness? Will youthful lusts, will the lawless dominion of youthful passions? No! far from it! they will certainly bring on you disease and misery, shame and death! Will wicked associates and loose company, (I can not mention them without earnestly exhorting you to shun them) will *they* lead you to higher honour and greater glory? It cannot be! Dread, remorse and ruin will be their portion and promotion for ever. Will you; can you be easy, as long as you defer to begin a course which will be crowned with the esteem and love of man; and what is infinitely greater, with the favour of God?

Believe me, I most earnestly and sincerely wish your happiness. Could I, dare I direct you to any thing else besides piety, goodness and wisdom: I would willingly do it. But I am certain these divine endowments are the only method of rising to reputation and comfort here, and to eternal happiness hereafter. Do not be so blind to your own
interest,

interest, as to neglect this friendly advice. Immediately devote yourselves to God and wisdom. Let me be so happy, as to see this endeavour to enlist you in the best pursuit, and to fire you with the noblest views, successful. I pray God! he may make you so wise and happy. *Amen.*

What will induce you greater happiness? Will you be content with the law's dominion of your passions? No! far from it! they will certainly bring on you disease and misery, shame and death. Will wicked associates and loose company, I can not imagine them without earnestly exhorting you to shun them? Will they lead you to higher honour and greater glory? I cannot be! Dread, remorse and ruin will be their portion and promotion for ever. Will you: can you be easily, as long as you shall to begin a course which will be crowned with the esteem and love of man: and what is infinitely greater, with the favour of God?

Believe me, I most earnestly and sincerely wish your happiness. - Could I, dare I direct you to any thing else but a pious, good, and wise? I would willingly do it. But I am certain that your own hearts are the only method of rising to a pure and common heart, and to eternal happiness. Do not be so blind to your own interest.

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SERMON IV.

The Prodigal a Warning to Youth.

LUKE XV. 12—19.

AND THE YOUNGER OF THEM SAID TO HIS FATHER, FATHER, GIVE ME THE PORTION OF GOODS THAT FALLETH TO ME. AND HE DIVIDED UNTO THEM HIS LIVING. AND NOT MANY DAYS AFTER, THE YOUNGER SON GATHERED ALL TOGETHER, AND TOOK HIS JOURNEY INTO A FAR COUNTRY, AND THERE WASTED HIS SUBSTANCE WITH RIOTOUS LIVING. AND WHEN HE HAD SPENT ALL, THERE AROSE A MIGHTY FAMINE IN THAT LAND; AND HE BEGAN TO BE IN WANT. AND HE WENT AND JOINED HIMSELF TO A CITIZEN OF THAT COUNTRY; AND HE SENT HIM INTO HIS FIELDS TO FEED SWINE. AND HE WOULD FAIN HAVE FILLED HIS BELLY WITH THE HUSKS THAT THE SWINE DID EAT: AND NO MAN GAVE UNTO HIM. AND WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF, HE SAID, HOW MANY HIRED SERVANTS OF MY FATHER'S HAVE BREAD ENOUGH AND TO SPARE; AND I PERISH WITH HUNGER! I WILL ARISE AND GO TO MY FATHER, AND WILL SAY UNTO HIM, FATHER, I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN AND BEFORE THEE, AND AM NO MORE WORTHY TO BE CALLED THY SON: MAKE ME AS ONE OF THY HIRED SERVANTS.

THAN UNCONQUERABLE MECKNESS and steady composure of mind, are most amiable and striking parts of our Saviour's character: and
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are exemplified almost in every occurrence of his life, the evangelical historians record. 2 Though all the labours and schemes of his philanthropy met with the worst returns, malice and ill-will could invent: though he is a constant witness to the inhumanity, censoriousness and superstition of the scribes and pharisees; dispositions, which being so opposite to his own, would strongly affect one of his sensibility and goodness; though he is daily treated with scorn, violence and reviling: yet he is still the same, always serene, calm and benevolent.

The parable of which my text is a part, is one instance among many of the invincible gentleness of his temper. The scribes and pharisees expressed great resentment at his conversing with publicans and sinners; though he did it with a generous view to their reformation and improvement. To convince and sooth them, he composes the PARABLE of the PRODIGAL; which was excellently adapted, by its whole contexture and by a variety of tender strokes, to vindicate his own conduct and to affect their hearts.]

By the *Prodigal* our LORD represents the miserable state, and sincere repentance of the publicans and sinners: the behaviour of the forgiving, com-

compassionate and kind father, is a picture of the sympathy, and generous, affectionate benevolence of his own ministry : under the image of *the elder son*, he describes the censorious, severe and unrelenting spirit of the scribes and pharisees. Thus, with admirable prudence and address, he insensibly leads them to approve his conduct. For the story would almost force them, by the propriety of the characters, and its striking resemblance to present circumstances, to discern its design ; and to make the suitable application of it to justify CHRIST, and to correct their own dispositions and views : while they felt their compassion moved with the distresses and grief of the penitent prodigal ; their disgust excited by the ill-nature of the elder son ; and their minds pleased and charmed with the kindness of the good father.

With this, the original and great, design of the parable many other lessons of piety and virtue are connected : and several useful pictures of human life and manners are exhibited. Amongst the rest, there is a lively, striking one of the follies and vices of youth. It holds forth in an affecting manner, the consequences of youthful debaucheries ; and represents the distress and anguish, which will attend our recovery to peace and happiness, after an indulgence to folly and vice.

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A concern for the virtue and welfare of youth engages us now to consider this part of the parable. In the prodigal, sirs! behold the young man void of understanding. Oh! that I could paint his conduct in those colours; that I could describe it in that language, as would pierce and persuade every youthful heart! But would my young friends give the subject their serious and deliberate attention; it would make sufficient amends for my defects; and, by the blessing of God, would render them wise, good and happy. Attend then to the subject! And may God succeed my endeavours and your attention. Amen!—We will begin,

First. With observing and tracing out *the common cause and source* of youthful folly, vice and debaucheries. We may learn it from the character and conduct of the prodigal. “A certain father
“had two sons: and the younger said unto him,
“Father, give me the portion of goods that fall-
“leth to me. And he divided unto them his
“living. And not many days after, the younger
“son gathered all together, and took his journey
“into a far country, and there wasted his sub-
“stance in riotous living.” To be independent,
master of his fortune, and free from the control of
parental authority was the object of his ambition.

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He thought it a reasonable request to be put in possession of that part of the paternal inheritance which fell to his lot: but it proceeded from the foolishness of his heart.

[That he had no just cause for disgust and resentment, at the exercise of parental power, is clear from the condescension and tenderness displayed by the good old man through every circumstance. The father appears in the same mild, engaging light, in his attention to this giddy youth's suit; in the encouragement and reception afforded him, when penitent; and in his conduct to the elder brother.

Did this young man intend to increase and improve his fortune by merchandize and trade: why then does he not lay his plan before his parent, and submit it to his wisdom? Why is he so eager and precipitate? Or if not skilful in improving, is he discreet and prudent in expending his fortune? Yes! his wisdom instructs him in the arts of riotous living: his prudence was displayed in the methods of wasting and consuming his substance amidst scenes of debauchery and vice.

He was set on gaining the possession of his fortune: that point obtained, his next business was

with all speed to fly from his father's notice, and to reside at a distance; where no admonitions of aged wisdom, no injunctions of parental authority could reach his ear: and where his father's eye could not shame and check his criminal pursuits. Tired with filial submission, charmed with the gay and delightful scenes of pleasure and joy his imagination painted before him, not suspecting that his schemes could deceive him, or that his wealth could be exhausted, he wants to commence his own master; and to be exempted from every thing, which would interfere with the desires of his heart. This was the folly and the first step towards the ruin of this thoughtless young man.]

This is the folly and the first step to the ruin of many, many a youth, like him abandoned to the gay, pleasing and intoxicating ideas of a giddy brain. To those, who are bewitched with this folly; who are impatient to be at their own disposal, and spurn at the instructions and commands of a parent, I would address myself: You! aspire first! to be independent and free, masters of your fortune and time. You think your age exempts you from the control of authority, and the severe councils of tasteless old age: and you judge it proper, that you should be
allowed

allowed to pursue your own inclinations without any remonstrance and restraint.

But why so warm, so eager in a compliance with your imaginations and thoughts? Why should you shun, and with disdain reject, the solicitations and advice of a kind and good friend? Say, are you certain that the path, you would take, is right and safe? May not they, who have travelled the road of life, for a course of years; who are acquainted with the various intricate turnings, bye-ways and dangerous paths, be more capable judges than you? May not they, who have seen the deception, mistakes and ruin of numbers that began life with them; who have learnt judgment from experience, long and approved experience, may not they be better qualified to conduct you to the plain, the right and safe path? Is not some deference due to years, experience and practice?

How can you form a proper judgment of the propriety and reasonableness of your own schemes and pursuits, young and untried, as you are in the ways of the world, without the council and advice of others; whose riper judgments, whose observations confirmed by many repeated facts, whose affectionate tenderness would be esteemed,

in the opinion of cool and considerate persons, sufficient pleas for an attention to their remonstrances and direction? Who are most likely to be deceived, you or your parents and friends? *You*, who are young and inexperienced; or *they*, who are advanced in life and knowledge? *You*, whose views are confined, and whose understanding is only opening: or *they*, whose acquaintance with the world is large, and whose judgment, through the succeeding periods of life, has been arriving to greater perfection? *You*, who are determined by the warmth and vigour of your passions and imaginations: or *they*, who view things with the calmness of age, with the sedateness of experience, and the coolness of wisdom? Can you therefore be at a loss to determine which is most prudent and safe, a respect for, and, in most cases, a submission to parental authority, goodness and wisdom: or to follow the bent of your own inclinations and desires?

Again, I may appeal to the inward feelings of your hearts to discern, which is most decent and amiable. For one moment forget your own schemes, and look abroad in the world. *Here* behold a young man modest, sober and discreet, sensible of his youth, sensible of his inexperience, diffident of his understanding, afraid of being
 missed,

milled, suspicious of his own schemes; but hearkening to, and weighing, the admonitions of parental wisdom and goodness. There, see an obstinate youth, warmed with the vigour of his years, flushed with the imaginary scenes of a life devoted, without restraint, to the pursuit of pleasure; hence he receives the injunctions of mildness with a fullen countenance and inward resentment: he can scarcely refrain from the smile of contempt, and congratulates himself when, he finds, he has escaped from the councils of the parent and friend. Consider the conduct of these youths: I know, which you will praise and commend; which, you will say, is most amiable and becoming. Only be the young man, you commend.

Once more, let me lead you again to the inmost recesses of your own heart: search your bosom; look within. Why do you dislike, why do you wish to avoid the commands and maxims of parental wisdom and goodness? Is not this, the reason; say have I not discovered the true cause? Let your conscience speak: you know, you are sensible, that your schemes, pursuits and courses cannot stand before aged wisdom: nor bear the scrutiny of a parents eye: you know the way of life you are engaged in, or would follow, is wrong; absolutely wrong; shameful and destructive:

therefore you choose not to be checked in your inclinations, or disturbed in your pursuits? This aggravates your folly, and will hasten your ruin. The prodigal was thus foolish: and was thus ruined. Proceed we to observe,

Secondly, From this story, the nature, folly and consequences of youthful debaucheries and a sinful course. While he was engaged in the gay pursuit, and knew no care, but to fill up the hours with delight and joy: whilst the continued succession of new scenes of riot and debauchery left no time to reflect, and less inclination to examine the state of his affairs, a different scene overtakes him. Having withdrawn from his father, and gratified himself without restraint, he soon falls into shame, distress and poverty. His wealth is spent in riotous living. A famine in the land aggravates his private distresses. He is reduced to pinching want and slavery. The companions of his expences and pleasures forsake him. He hires himself to feed swine: and envies them the husks they eat.

[This distressing situation of the prodigal is only a picture of what are, in general, the natural consequences of a heart governed by the same principles, and of a life spent after the same manner.

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And this is the next important lesson, the character in the text is suited to convey to the feelings of every young mind.]

Mark, my friends, the misery and woe, which attends the person lost to modest diffidence, and to filial affection and reverence. He shakes off the submission and duty of a son. He flies from the inspection of a good and venerable parent : for to know that the kind old man saw him, would shake his wicked purposes, and fill his inmost soul with horror and shame. He becomes the slave of his passion, and yields to every command of appetite. He pursues whatever is gay, expensive, noisy and riotous. To send round the intoxicating bowl, to study the art of intemperance and riot, to equal and surpass others in extravagance and debauchery, in the acts of gallantry and lewdness ; to riot with drunkards, rakes and harlots ; to destroy modest innocence, to play high, to make life all dissipation, noise and vice, to laugh at religion and virtue, to treat futurity as a fable.— This is the employment and ambition of the prodigal. These scenes are acted over, pursued and repeated, without thought and care ; till the health is impaired, his substance wasted, and no resources are left for pleasure, or even for bread. Lost to all inclination, and capacity for honest labour,

labour, he cannot work: forsaken by the companions of his debaucheries, no possibility of redress and assistance is to be expected from them: having ungratefully forsaken his parent and his friends, he is ashamed to seek that succour from them; which by the basest conduct he had forfeited. He is plunged into adversity, a stranger to the habits of prudence and application; a stranger to the vigour and manly resolution of an innocent mind; a stranger to inward peace and serenity; sinking under the contempt of his former friends, and the loss of the esteem and regard of the sober and worthy; sinking under the anguish and remorse of his own mind, and under the prospect of that dark, dark scene, his former life, his present condition and futurity presented to his view.

Who can bear the foresight of adversity, brought on by a very criminal behaviour, and heightened by a concurrence of piercing and overwhelming incidents? Yet this is the end of the sons of debauchery, extravagance and riot. Gracious God! into what misery and woe do thy creatures hurry themselves, breaking through all the ties of reason, conscience, duty and prudence. And, my dear hearers, will you after having been called to behold this affecting scene, after having
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been admonished and alarmed, will you take any measures productive of such misery and woe.

If you are impatient of the inspection and authority of a parent's eye; if you stifle the remonstrances of reason, gratitude and interest; if without reflexion you are engaged only in the gay, expensive schemes of pleasure, diversion and riot: this misery, this adversity will in some measure, in *proportion* to your folly and guilt, be *yours*. Oh! how the thought pierces every heart, that wishes you well! What a deep groan does it now force from the parental bosom! With pity, with concern will every countenance behold you! At the distant prospect of this woe, I am sensibly affected and grieved for you. Your parents, your friends, every good man, the indulgent God of heaven, pity, and feel for you. O! sigh! Pause, think to what sinful courses tend! Say, seriously and solemnly to yourselves, if thou, my soul, indulgest to the follies and vices of that prodigal, his fate, distressing and calamitous as it was, will be thy doom. I shudder at the view! O! good heaven keep me from it! I will fly from the appearance of such evil.

But notwithstanding the serious impressions left on the mind by such a view of the issue of a wicked

wicked course, and the good resolutions it may for the present inspire, the fond hope of a recovery by sincere repentance, and timely reformation may steal into the bosom; and guided by the warmth of your imaginations and strength of your passions will overcome your resolutions, and seduce you into the forbidden, dangerous path. You will only indulge to the gaiety and pleasures for which youth call: and you will devote the calmer and more sedate years of life to recover your virtue, dignity and peace. To detect the fallacy, and show the evil of such delusive expectations, will be our business under the

Third observation. The pungent remorse, and the bitterness of that repentance; which alone can rescue us from the effects of youthful sins. "When he had spent all, there arose a
 "mighty famine in that land; and he began to
 "be in want. And he went and joined himself
 "to a citizen of that country; and he sent him
 "into his fields to feed swine. And he would
 "fain have filled his belly with the husks that
 "the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.
 "And when he came to himself, he said, How
 "many hired servants of my father's have bread
 "enough and to spare; and I perish with hunger!
 "I will arise and go to my father, and will say
 "unto

“unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven
“and before thee, and am no more worthy to be
“called thy son: make me as one of thy hired
“servants.”

I. Observe, The reluctance and difficulty, with which the prodigal is brought to sincere and ingenuous repentance. When he found his fortune dissipated, and the bitter effects of vice overtaking him, does he think of returning to his father's house, with humble acknowledgments of his guilt, throwing himself on parental mercy? No! he was not sufficiently humbled.

He had quitted his father's house with gaiety and parade: and could not bear the thought of returning in the condition of a beggar, destitute of food and raiment. He rather chose to submit to the meanest employment, and to feel the extremity of want and shame; before he took a measure so mortifying to the secret pride and haughtiness of his mind. He offered his service to a person who sent him to feed his swine: the husks, on which they fed, appeared to him a delicious repast, he was reduced to such indigence, and no man gave him a morsel of any kind. Hunger, slavery and shame at last awaken him out of his dream; these circumstances subdue the haughtiness
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of his spirits. When all hope, and remedy was cut off, but what arose from his father's clemency; then, and not before, did he repent.

Hazard not therefore your happiness by depending on a future season of remorse and repentance, which in all probability only some peculiar circumstances will excite. Our LORD by introducing into this parable the circumstance of a famine; which fell out at the time the prodigal was reduced to want, and rendered his case almost helpless, leads us to ascribe his repentance more to the effect of this famine on his condition, than to the first awakenings of conscience, or to the common consequences of folly. With so great difficulty is the mind, hardened by vicious indulgence, brought to serious thoughts, and softened into penitent relentings! By repeated scenes of folly, the mind becomes averse to sober thought: its power over its actions and affections is enervated: the wretchedness and want, that ensue, cherish pride and reservedness: and shame prevents an ingenuous acknowledgment.

[Not to say, how base a thing it is to sin with the hope of repenting; it is most likely, the hope will deceive. But, if by a peculiar tenderness of conscience or by adversity and woe joined with
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the grace of God, the fumes of intoxication, which had blinded your understanding, should be dissipated; your pride should be humbled; and you should reflect and acknowledge your sins and follies with all the sentiments and feelings of unfeigned repentance;] consider

2. How many circumstances will unite to make repentance more keen, and to fill the soul with bitter sorrow. The general circumstances, which excited this distress and anguish in his mind, were not peculiar to the prodigal in the text: but are the natural, genuine and common attendants on youthful debaucheries. To lay them before you.

You cannot imagine, how keen and piercing will be your reflexions, when you find your fortune dissipated, and squandered away on rakes and prostitutes, the pests of society, and the disgrace of human nature. How will you bear to look back on the days of innocence, when you were happy in the endearments of a father's house, in the esteem of the good, and in the prospect of many days of ease, health and joy? You will then recollect the kind and tender intreaties, the affectionate and faithful warnings of a prudent friend, or a parent. The eagerness, with which you hastened to forget them; and the disgust, with which you heard them.

will

will rise to reflexion. You will then think, how ungratefully you have overwhelmed and sunk down, with grief, those who desired to live only to see you good and happy. You will then begin to pity the kind and venerable parents, whose days you have embittered, whose life you have shortened.— Methinks I hear you cry out in the bitterness of your soul; How base, how cruel has been my conduct! O! my parents! my father, my mother, against them have I sinned! against all their care, wisdom and love! Oh! my parents!

Once more, you will recollect that you have sinned against God, the holy, gracious and glorious Majesty of Heaven; against the guardian of your infancy and childhood; against the God, whom you was early taught to revere and serve: whose eyes saw you in all the haunts of vice; whose patience bore with your debaucheries and profaneness. You will remember that you have offended against this God, the greatest and best of beings. These bitter reflexions will croud in upon you! These thoughts will rush in like a host of enraged enemies! Heaven grant your sins may never drive you to the necessity of finding your safety in these bitter and torturing reflexions! In faithfulness and affection to you, I must warn you; if like the prodigal you give the reins to unsuspicious conceit,

conceit, giddy passions and vicious appetites; you will like him, fall into distress, shame and woe: and unless you, like him, feel the anguish of repentance you must be for ever undone.

We have endeavoured to give you a just and affecting view of the folly and misery of youthful vices, as both are exemplified in the character of the prodigal. And the subject inforces on you these dictates of wisdom and happiness: Flee youthful lusts: Be sober minded.

But then, my friends, let us not stop here; let our bosoms glow with generous, noble views. A sober frugal and industrious temper is a worthy quality in youth. But beware; from these deserving attainments, there arises a danger of failing in the more graceful, ornamental and amiable virtues. There is another character in the parable before us, besides that of the prodigal: which holds forth a picture of the deformity, that may stain a sober youth.

The elder brother, though temperate and regular in his manners and intent on improving the paternal estate, seems to have been a stranger to the principles of true goodness. His was a sordid,

unfeeling and disagreeable temper. He was not indeed led astray by the love of gaiety, luxury and riot: but vice in him assumed another form: he was devoid of the generous, humane and delicate feelings. Self engaged his whole attention and care. Hence he was austere and rigid, avaricious and sour. For he could think of the distresses and griefs of a brother, of a penitent brother, without the emotions of benevolence, pity or natural affection. He could behold unmoved, he could hear without relenting his good old father, with wisdom and meekness on his tongue, with condescension and kindness in his looks. Notwithstanding his high pretensions and confident boasts of virtue, the odious affections of pride, envy and selfishness were the outlines of his character.

My dear hearers, be not like to this ungenerous youth: avoid his insensibility, his want of tenderness. Be sober: be frugal: but withal be tender, humane and generous. Let your hearts overflow in a perpetual stream of good will: and melt into compassion and sympathy. Relieve the distressed: sooth the afflicted: encourage virtue: animate the reformation of the penitent: be the friends of mankind. Be frugal; that you may be furnished with the resources of liberality.

Be

Be sober, that your minds may remain untainted, so that you may more exquisitely taste the pure joys of undimmed and universal love. Live, O! ye, who are formed to display the charms, and taste the delights, and imbibe the sentiments of benevolence: ye, who are called to follow a good God, and a good SAVIOUR: live not for yourselves, but for mankind. There are two characters; though opposite, both vicious, both to be carefully shunned; both odious; that of the extravagant debauchee, and that of the sober, but selfish and unfeeling youth. The former moves our pity: the latter begets our abhorrence and contempt. One is an enemy to himself: the other is an enemy to the principles of benevolence, and to the interest of human happiness.

On the whole my young friends, "Whatsoever things are true; whatsoever things are honest; whatsoever things are of good report: whatsoever things are pure;" think on these things: to do this, will secure you from poverty and shame. But, not contented with these attainments, aim at habits, still more engaging and useful; "and whatever things are lovely" and generous: kind and benevolent; think on, and

study **THESE** things : " if there be any virtue ; if
 " there be any praise," unite the pursuit of **BOTH**.
 And may a holy and good God favour your vir-
 tuous aspirations ; lead them on to the present
 acts of righteousness and charity ; and crown
 them with honour in the regions of eternal purity
 and love. *Amen.*

SER-
 " things are true, whatever things are honest ;
 " whatever things are of good report ; what-
 " ever things are pure ; what on these things ;
 " to do this, will I leave you ; and poverty and
 " fame. But not contented with their state,
 " and sin as habits, still more engaging and
 " and whatever things are lovely ; and
 " generous ; kind and benevolent ; think on, and
 study

The Christian Lady, to whom the venerable and affectionate spouse John directs his second epistle, had children who did not need in her piety.

SERMON V. applied in the words of my text: "I rejoice that thy children walking in truth."

The Profession of Christianity urged on Youth.

They who are convinced of the excellence and divinity of the Christian faith must

I REJOICE GREATLY, THAT I FOUND OF THY CHILDREN WALKING IN TRUTH, AS WE HAVE RECEIVED A COMMANDMENT FROM THE FATHER.

I NOW rise up to address those who have descended from parents, that made an open, serious and consistent profession of religion. The intimation of such a design is a plain acknowledgment, that to be born of Christian parents and to have been educated in the knowledge of the gospel is, in my opinion, by no means sufficient to denominate us Christians "in deed and in truth." — Religion is a personal thing; and every one, who would support the character, and gain the reward, of a Christian, must be a disciple of CHRIST himself. The faith and blessings of the gospel do not go by entail.

The Christian Lady, to whom the venerable and affectionate apostle John directs his second epistle, had children who did not tread in her pious steps, nor embrace Christianity. This is implied in the words of my text: "I rejoice that I find of thy children walking in the truth:" i. e. some of them making a profession of the gospel: for "the truth" means the true Christian religion.]

They, who are convinced of the excellence importance and divinity of the Christian faith must be desirous of having it perpetuated in the world: and will rejoice to see it adopted and supported by the offspring of those who have been its advocates and ornaments. The matter is of that consequence, my young friends, to yourselves and to the world, that it ought undoubtedly to have your serious attention as soon as you are capable of thinking and acting for yourselves.

I come this day, to propose the subject to your cool consideration. Your parents, by profession and by life, were Christians. You have been brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The question is, whether upon the foundation of their examples and injunctions, you be brought to make the public profession of the Christian religion the choice and determination

of

of your own minds. By the very manner in which this point is proposed, you will perceive there is no design to bring you under any shackles, but those of truth and reason. You are to judge for yourselves and proceed according to the conviction of your own minds. Permit us to offer some thoughts which may assist your determination.

The matter, which you should propose to yourselves, the point, which we earnestly as well as affectionately wish to carry is this—that as you have been brought up in the church of CHRIST, you would, from knowledge and choice, become members of it—that, like the children of the Elect Lady, you would “walk in the truth” or embrace the gospel, taking CHRIST for your LORD and master, and his gospel for the rule of your life, and the foundation of all your hope. The affair, it may be supposed, is not wholly indifferent to yourselves; for if you have bestowed any sober thought upon it, you must feel a bias for this course of conduct. But that the conclusion, to which you come, may be solid, judicious and effectual, it is proper, that you do not content yourselves with a few desultory, wavering reflexions; but enter into the question closely, and deliberately form your purpose. Therefore,

First, Consider the nature and excellence of Christianity, it is recommended to your attachment and reception as *the truth, the truth of God*. Being the religion of your friends, it deserves some respect: you should not hastily and rashly drop the sentiments, which, by their wisdom and care, were instilled into the mind. This is, at least, a plea for bestowing on them a serious examination.—The friends of the gospel are not afraid of its undergoing a careful examination. They only fear its being rejected, with as little knowledge, and as little enquiry, as if it wore on the very face of it the most striking marks of weakness and absurdity.

It may have been weakly defended, and very absurd systems may have sought shelter under its sacred name. If any thing of that kind should have been mixed with the knowledge of CHRIST, which you have been taught, before you suffer yourselves on that account, to admit any unfavourable opinion of the gospel, it is highly necessary that you fairly enquire; whether such absurdities be any part of the doctrine of CHRIST. This is to be known by reading the New Testament.

That invaluable book will give you the only true representation of the Christian doctrine, and will

will assist you to judge of the evidences of its divine authority. You will there learn, how the preaching of CHRIST and of his apostles was supported by heaven. You will there see, with what opposition they had to struggle; with what success their labours were crowned; and how their doctrine prevailed only by the force of evidence, and its own truth. The excellence of the Christian morals will charm you. The great suitableness of the grace and mercy of the gospel to our circumstances, as guilty, degenerate and dying creatures, will affect you. The sublimity of its promises will raise sentiments of grateful wonder in your breasts. The simplicity, integrity and self-denial of its first preachers will bespeak your favourable regard to their testimony. The character of the great author of this faith will, above all, excite your admiration and esteem. You will scarcely be able as you review these things, to avoid feeling a strong persuasion of the truth of the gospel. It, particularly, deserves your attention here, that the divine authority of the Christian religion is not a matter of speculation, but of FACT. It ariseth from certain facts, which are to be ascertained as are all other facts; by the uniform testimony of all ages and the general voice of history. By history we can trace back the knowledge and
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being of this religion, in the world, to the time when the New Testament represents it as first preached and received. By the testimony of numerous writers of that age and of the ages immediately succeeding, we can establish the great facts, of the preaching, miracles and resurrection of Christ, of the preaching of his apostles, and of the planting of his religion, amidst every difficulty, by an extraordinary power from heaven. All ages, in one degree or another, for almost two thousand years, bear witness to these things.

(The evidence that argues in favour of the truth of the gospel, be it observed and firmly remembered, is in itself solid and convincing, and must remain so independently of any objections that are made to particular doctrines of the gospel, or to the want of universality, or much less can it be weakened by any difficulties raised about the Mosaic account of the Fall or the Deluge, or from particular incidents in the history of the Israelites and of the Old Testament. Most, if not all, which difficulties admit of a rational solution, if closely examined: and derive their force in general either from a captious spirit, or from ignorance, or from the obscurity in which time involves ancient transactions.

But

But how solid soever be the objections drawn from these topics, they do not set aside or impair the plain and direct proofs that Jesus was the MESSIAH, and that in him we have eternal life. On these proofs be persuaded to bestow a serious attention, that your faith may rest not on the word of men but of God. If you, indeed, love truth, religion will be the subject of your careful and honest enquiry. The consequence of this, it is not doubted, will be a full conviction of the divine original and authority of the gospel. The next step is, that

Secondly, You make a personal and public profession of your faith in it. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The principles of Christianity are designed to diffuse light and virtue through the world. But this beneficial design cannot be answered, unless every one who embraces them, maketh an explicit and open profession of his religious regard to them, and giveth them all the countenance and support in his power. On this ground hath our Lord declared in words, which carry the force of a command and the encouragement of a promise: "Whosoever confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father and his angels."

You,

You, it is supposed, are arrived to an age when it is peculiarly proper, avowedly, to commence the disciples of CHRIST. That this profession should be made by every one for himself, hath appeared very rational to all Christians: and, accordingly, some have pointed out one method, others another way of doing it: the rite of confirmation has been used for this purpose: and the Lord's Table has been considered as answering this view. But for the first practice there is no foundation in the New Testament: nor is the latter, there, represented under this notion as the commencement or badge of the Christian profession.

The rite, which was enjoined by CHRIST for this end, and the administration of which by the apostles, uniformly, expressed this end, and this end only, was BAPTISM. By this rite they who were convinced of the divine authority of CHRIST, made their serious acknowledgment of it, and became his disciples. Admit the word of exhortation, to do the same. Hereby accept, with joy and gratitude, the gracious terms of pardon, peace and eternal life, which are held out to you in the gospel.

It is true, that this idea of Baptism has been strictly adhered to by only a part, and even a small

part

part of the Christian world: in like manner very few have preserved just and scriptural notions of the LORD's Supper. But the mistakes under which many, or a great part of Christians, have laboured, should be no impediment to our following what, in any instance, appear just sentiments.

You will not, in the present case, upon that account, imagine; that, by being baptised into the name of CHRIST, you enlist into any party; or take any particular name upon you. No. By this rite you will profess yourself, a *Christian*.—Whom will you hereby acknowledge to be your Master and your SAVIOUR, but CHRIST? To whose law will you submit, but unto that of CHRIST? Into whose kingdom will you enter, but into that of CHRIST? Instead then of looking upon this rite as merely a party distinction, you should comply with it on the liberal ground of its being a scriptural method of confessing CHRIST, our common LORD, before men. Instead of being ashamed of it, as a singular practice, which hath not the countenance of the Christian world, you should reflect, that they, who esteem the baptism of infants valid, yet consider it as a shameful and dangerous neglect for others, who did not receive it, to live and die unbaptised. So that, upon
your

your *own* principles and in *their* judgment, you can not justify it, if you do not thus profess yourself a Christian.

[These hints are offered to correct mistakes and to obviate objections. Your duty, in this respect, ariseth not from the opinion and authority of men but from the sense and conviction of your own mind; from a conviction, that the Christian religion is divine, and that the public profession of it, by baptism, is enjoined by its author, and due to him from gratitude and zeal.]

By being baptised into his name is this profession at *first*, solemnly and personally, made: but is it to stop here? By no means. You are not only to choose and determine *for, and by, yourself*: but you are to *join others* in this cause. The profession made at baptism is to be carried on and supported, by the regular duties of public worship, and a conscientious attendance on the Lord's Supper. The first Christians, when they had gladly received the word, and had been baptised, "continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer." Had they not done this, the cause would have died in its infancy.

And

And would you maintain the spirit of love and attachment to your Master and SAVIOUR; or would you hand down, to the next age, the truth and grace you have received, you must do the same. Remissness and neglect, as to the duties of social devotion, will have a bad effect on yourselves and on the cause of CHRIST: on *yourselves*, by indulging a spirit of indifference and languor in religion; and on the *cause of CHRIST*, by setting others an example of forsaking the assembly of the saints, and furnishing them with an excuse from your own practice. But to proceed in our subject, "walking in the truth" implieth not only embracing the gospel and making a profession of it, but

Thirdly, A *practical obedience* to it in the whole course of life. [Nothing short of this will answer any saving purpose. Are you exhorted to examine the evidences of that pretension, the gospel makes to a divine origin? Are you invited and persuaded, if satisfied on this head, to add to an inward conviction of its truth an open and public profession of your faith in it? Is it recommended to you, is it urged upon you, to keep up this profession of Christianity, by a serious attendance on all the public duties of religion? All this is done with a further view: that your heart and lives may

may be habitually brought under the practical power of Christian principles. The profession of Christianity, without the life of a Christian, is nothing but a form, "why," saith its divine author, "call ye me LORD, LORD, and do not the things which I say?" He hath faithfully forewarned us, that this will be ineffectual on the great day. "Not every one, that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven."]

If any one profess himself a Christian, what is he understood to mean thereby, but an holy resolution steadily to pursue religious virtue, as the last design, the great end of the institution of CHRIST? To this point is your care to be directed: hither are all your thoughts to tend.—
 "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation unto all men, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world: whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things." It should be your aim and ambition
 to

to support a *character* for sobriety, integrity and benevolence.

In the world swearing, drunkenness and lewdness are little discouraged: passion and resentment, and some practices not perfectly reconcileable with strict probity, are thought little of: and religion and piety meet with little countenance from the practice or converse of men. But the Christian profession invests us with a new, a superior character to *that* of the men of the world: it brings us under an higher and purer law, than that of the customs and maxims of this world: and it opens to us nobler and sublimer views and prospects, than the world affords. The Christian is the HEIR of God and the JOINT-HEIR with JESUS CHRIST. He is not of this world, but his conversation is in heaven. His wisdom, duty and happiness is to know and do the perfect and acceptable will of God.— And the religion which you embrace, as it teaches your duty, so it will enable you to perform it.

“ The gospel is a complete rule of life. It not only enjoins you to be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness, but administers every needful help and instruction, to make you perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The precepts, it delivers, have such a

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“commanding force and beauty in them, and
 “carry such conviction into the mind; the cha-
 “racter it prescribes as a model for your imitation,
 “is so amiable, so excellent and godlike; the
 “exhortations it addresses to your love and gra-
 “titude, and to all the generous passions of the
 “heart, are so affectionate and persuasive; the
 “motives it proposes to your hopes and fears, so
 “great and alarming; so glorious and tremendous;
 “so far more exceeding all that we can in thought
 “or imagination conceive; that nothing will be
 “able to shake your virtue, while you keep these
 “in view, or preserve the impression of them fresh
 “in your minds*.” This leads me to observe,

Lastly, That to walk in the truth means,
 that you persevere and proceed on towards per-
 fection. The phrase signifies a steady, uniform,
 continued course of life. After having began in
 the spirit, much yet remains, Christian know-
 ledge is to be enlarged: pious and virtuous dispo-
 sitions are to be strengthened: and holy habits
 are to be established.

It often happens, that young persons enter upon
 a course of religion and virtue with great vigour,

* Dr. Wm. Adams's Sermons and Tracts, p. 365, 366.

with

with a very serious spirit and with a holy tenderness of mind. But they afterwards grow remiss; and learn, as future years throw them more into the world, to look upon their first ardor as enthusiasm, and their first holy regularity of devotion and manners as a needless scrupulosity, as being righteous over much. The raptures of piety, through time, will naturally subside; the ardor of passion will, of course, cool: but when such sentiments are calmly admitted and designedly indulged, there is reason to fear, that the soul will not "grow in grace and in the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS:" that such will not be "made perfect unto every good work, nor be built up in their holy faith;" if they be even kept in the love of God.

"It is therefore of unspeakable consequence to guard the first years of your life from danger, till virtue has got the full possession, and established its empire over the heart. And this will make the rest of your duty a pleasure, and give joy and gladness to all your future days*." Wise and happy is he, who doth not let an habit of remissness, with respect to the private or public duties of devotion, gain upon him: but, by

* Adams, as before, p. 373.

seriousness and regularity in both, preserves and displays a strong sense of piety. Wise and happy is he, who doth not admit loose notions upon points of duty; but attends to the purity and extent of the divine law. Wise and happy is he, who, in the intercourses of life, whether of business or amusement, maintains an holy watch over his spirit, that his sense of religion, love of goodness and tenderness of conscience be not diminished by the manners of those with whom he converses. Wise and "happy is he, who feareth always:" "For it is better to fear offending than to sorrow for having offended: and the care of caution is not so troublesome, as the bitterness of late repentance*."

But is it enough that you use watchfulness and attention, not to loose your first love; ought not your thoughts and pains to be given to your improvement and establishment in the good ways of God? Religion, whether you consider it as consisting in the knowledge of God and of JESUS CHRIST, or as importing the fear of God and keeping his commandments, is a progressive thing. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect

* Dr. Lardner.

"day."

“day.” The most effectual security, against declensions in piety and goodness, is an holy, habitual solicitude to go on unto perfection in knowledge and practice.

Both will be greatly promoted, by a course of reading, as you have time and ability, pursued with this design, to gain a more exact and extensive acquaintance with the principles of Christianity, and to cherish a more lively and practical sense of their power. The *Lord's Day* affords peculiar leisure and opportunity for doing something considerable in this way of religious improvement and proficiency. The *Holy Scriptures*, in this view, call for and merit your first and chief attention; though it may be desirable to obtain, in the perusal of them, the assistance of some of the best commentators for understanding their meaning and discovering their beauties and excellencies. The practical writers, in our language, are numerous and the most judicious of them deserve a serious reading. Sermons also will form a valuable means of religious improvement*.

Let

* We are told of a late eminent physician and philosopher, Sir John Pringle, that he was a diligent and frequent reader of sermons: “which,” observes his excellent biographer, “form a valuable part of English literature. Indeed, taken in their full extent, they

Let us now, my friends, pause, and reflect what advices have been offered; what hints have been suggested, to explain what is implied by "walking in the truth:" or to hold forth that conduct, which affection to you and zeal for Christianity prompt us earnestly to recommend. What then hath been said? You have been exhorted to enquire into the proofs of the divine origin of the Christian religion. On a supposition, that the witness for its truth being heard, your minds are convinced that it is of God, you have been exhorted to profess yourselves, Christians, by baptism and a continued course of conformity to the Christian institutions and worship. You have been exhorted not to rest in the Christian name, but to add to it a Christian character; by adding to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and universal charity. And you have also been

"constitute a much more valuable part of English literature, than, perhaps, is commonly imagined.—
 "For, independently of their theological merit, in explaining the doctrines of Natural and Revealed Religion, and throwing light on passages of scripture, we
 "shall scarcely any where meet with a richer treasure of
 "practical observations, or with reflections on life and
 "manners, that are better calculated to improve the
 "understanding, mend the heart, and regulate the conduct." Life of Sir John Pringle, by Dr. Kippis, prefixed to his Six Discourses, p. 75, 76.

exhorted,

exhorted, having entered on this career of wisdom piety and goodness, to guard against remissness in it and to go on in it with vigour and constancy.

On the review of these exhortations, what can be offered against their propriety, reasonableness and importance. The gospel displays before you its truth, grace, and glory. It offers to direct your steps, through this life, with honour and usefulness, innocence and safety. It assures you of the forgiveness of your sins, and it promises you eternal life. It is scarcely to be conceived, that you can look upon these as light and trivial blessings. In reality they are comprehensive of every advantage, that can be important to a *rational*, or dear to a *sinful*, creature.

You are now addressed, as arrived at years to judge of the excellence and moment of these things; you are invited to form a calm, deliberate and fair judgment of them, and to take up a suitable determination. The subject is very interesting: the moment is critical. If, when thus called and invited, you neglect to bestow a sober attention upon these considerations, you will, perhaps, always find some plea for not doing it: and the unwillingness to think upon them, and to act accordingly, will, with every delay, increase.

Remember that you are the creatures of God, whose mercies you daily enjoy and at whose tribunal you must appear. Remember, that you are called into the kingdom of his dear Son here, and are invited to partake of his kingdom of glory hereafter. Remember, that you are not born for a day, but for ETERNITY. In conjunction with the serious recollection of these facts, remember that having been instructed in the knowledge of CHRIST, it now lieth with you to build upon that foundation a voluntary faith and an holy, useful life. It lieth with you to look around and consider, whether you will be a disciple of CHRIST in deed and in truth. You are now in the hands of your own council.

The claims of God by CHRIST JESUS are set before you : the blessings and hopes of the gospel are offered to you, and the matter is left to your choice. Shall any one turn away with indifference and neglect ? Shall any one say, even in his heart, for who would openly avow such a purpose, " I will not take him for my LORD and Master ; " I will not follow the gospel as the rule of life ; " nor seek its grace as the foundation of my " hope." In the judgment of charity, in the judgment of truth, it may be presumed, such thoughts are far from every mind here. But there

there is an unwillingness, there is an averfeness to coming to an immediate resolution for the profession and practice of religion. Some further time is requested. When, alas! a more convenient opportunity may never come : and when much of the advantage, comfort and beauty of the Christian profession is lost by every delay.

Let one resolution then arise in every youthful breast : let one resolution go round this assembly : “ As for me, I will give up myself to the service of GOD and of his CHRIST. Come let us all join ourselves to the LORD in a covenant never to be forgotten.” Let every pious, every friendly mind answer to these rising vows, *Amen*. May the grace of GOD strengthen them, and the mercy of GOD accept them, *Amen*.

SER-

S E R M O N VI.

The Pleas for neglecting public Worship
considered.

NEHEMIAH xiii. 11.

WHY IS THE HOUSE OF GOD FORSAKEN?

WHEN we reflect on the relation of the Divine Being to us, as the sole author, proprietor and governor of all things in heaven and earth, the worship of his benevolent and glorious Majesty evidently appears to be the just tribute of our homage and gratitude. When we consider our constant and absolute dependence upon him as the great preserver of the world, by whose power our being is supported; and as its liberal benefactor, by whose munificence our wants are supplied; to implore his protection, and by humble addresses to seek the benefits, of which he is the inexhaustible fountain, is plainly rational and fit. When it is considered of what use and advantage it must be to have the faith and knowledge of so great, benevolent and holy a power main-

maintained and diffused, the acts of contemplating, adoring and praising his name, must clearly appear to be as serviceable as they are fit. When it is considered that a devout and lively sense of God on the mind is the most effectual restraint upon all iniquity and vice; it is the dictate of wisdom and of virtuous zeal to use the most public methods of promoting and kindling a strong and general sense of the Deity. When it is considered, how much our sentiments are enlarged and improved, and our joys raised and heightened by society, public worship is on this account a wise and rational service; for it brings the advantages of society into religion, and by pouring the additional pleasures of sympathy into the heart, it enhances the glow and satisfactions of devotion. When it is remembered, that instructions and discourses, on the interesting branches and motives of religious virtue, are joined to the acts of adoration and praise; the public institutions of religion rise in use and importance; the house of God hereby becomes the school of religious virtue, and a seminary of wisdom to train us up in the noblest habits.

In a word, when it is considered, that the public worship of the one God and Father of All, is a powerful cement of love and union amongst
men;

men; and that, by it, the weighty truths of religion are made known and impressed, come to be declared and felt, how reasonable is it mutually to exhort each other, and say, "Come ye; let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob: come let us serve the LORD in the beauty of holiness."

On these principles, public worship has gained the approbation and countenance of all ages and nations. The wisest law-givers have used the aids thereof to support public virtue and happiness. From the earliest times, seasons have been appointed, days and hours devoted to the performance of sacred offices; altars have been raised and temples built. The law of Moses enacted various times and days, for the whole community to engage in religious duties. Our divine pattern regularly attended the services of the Jewish synagogue. The primitive Christians constantly assembled together on the first day of the week (which very early received the name of *the Lord's Day*) for "fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer:" besides that, till the whole Jewish dispensation was abolished, they joined in the services and solemnities of the Jewish sabbaths and synagogues. Christianity has given a new sanction to public worship, by the appointment of Baptism and the

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LORD's Supper to maintain the public profession of religion; and by the encouraging promise of our SAVIOUR's gracious presence; "wherever two or three are gathered together in his name." It goes further; it represents social devotion as the spring of the transports, which happy spirits enjoy in the regions of pure and immortal bliss. Now after such a concurrence, such an harmony of proofs to illustrate the importance of assembling ourselves together; since it is plainly to be deduced from these considerations, that we are bound by every possible obligation to keep up, with decency and decorum, the solemn offices of public devotion; it may be justly asked, with surprize and resentment and grief, in the language of the text, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Why are its walls left empty and its services slighted?

I am sensible these words do not, originally, refer to the conduct of such as absent themselves from the house of God; but to some abuses and neglects of another kind. That wise and pious reformer, Nehemiah, had discovered, that the portion and pay of the Levites and singers, either through a remissness in collecting it, or through the baseness of the collectors, had been withheld from them: and that for want of due encourage-

encouragement, they had fled every one to his field, and repaired to the cultivation of their estates, instead of working and serving in the house of God. "And I perceived," says he, "that the portion of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and singers that did the work were fled every one to his field; and then contended I with the rulers and said: "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Not only the sound of the words, but the occasion of the remonstrance, justifies the application of them to any instance of conduct, which shews a contempt and neglect of the Deity.

I am sorry that under the dispensation of the gospel, when the encouragements and motives to the offices of devotion are so animating and urgent, there should be any reason to contend, though with the spirit of meekness and the force of argument, with Christians, and to say, "Why is the house of God forsaken and slighted?" But the many vacancies, visible in our places of public worship, are too evident proofs of absence from, and indifference to, the offices of devotion performed there: proofs, that the obligations thereto are either weakly evaded, or else set aside by the force of stronger and juster reasons. On either
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supposition it is fit in a matter so important, fairly to hear, and candidly to debate it.

Let the excuses for absence be alledged, and their weight be tried. They, who support religion by a serious and constant attendance on its public services, will be confirmed in their pious conduct : and possibly some, who seldom visit the house of God, may be awakened to zeal, regularity and diligence in countenancing its solemnities by their presence. Let me ask then, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" And the pleas, by which an absence from it is defended, shall be produced and considered : and from hence will the improvement of the subject naturally arise.

First. The case of some is, that in this they are entirely governed by motives of a worldly nature, by the calls of profit or of pleasure. The emergencies of business and the hurry of their affairs through the week, they urge, leave them no time to post their accounts ; or else some sudden call, some important matter arises, that will admit of no delay ; and they are obliged to employ those hours in the warehouse or counting-house, which should be filled up by an attendance at God's house.

them that short portion of time, which reason and scripture both call on us to redeem from them and to devote to divine and eternal interests.

Let it also be observed, that the interval of the LORD'S Day, religiously observed, so far from interfering with the demands of business and the views of pleasure, would really assist and advance both. For it would produce an agreeable change in the employment of our thoughts, affections and time: it would cause a rest from the cares and joys, which at the best fatigue and cloy: and it would give our return to them a new relish.— But were it not so. It is a plea that will never stand the test of reason, or the tribunal of the great Judge; “My own advantage caused me to neglect the honour of God: my own pleasure prevailed above the will of my heavenly Father. “I was too deeply engaged, and too much amused with the things of time to mind the interests of “eternity.” But why, say I, this plea will never bear us out before the Sovereign Judge; whilst it has been dwelt upon, have not *you* felt its weakness? Hath not the mention excited inward confusion and shame?

Secondly. It is a pretence apparently more reasonable, and doubtless not so repugnant to piety,

piety, under which others take shelter. They alledge the distance of their dwellings from the house of God, the badness of the road leading thither at some seasons of the year, the want of health to go abroad, or the inclemency of the weather.

Now not to say that there are in almost every Christian society, even in the present low state of pious zeal, some (God be praised) who chearfully surmount many, if not a concurrence of these inconveniences, by their presence to keep up and enjoy the benefits of public worship—not to say that the sincerity of our love to God is more plainly evinced and more strongly proved, by the difficulties we surmount to testify and express it—not to say that the reality of these difficulties will be discerned and known by others; and will hereby render our example, in a diligent and constant attendance on God's house, notwithstanding them, much more edifying and instructive—not to say the more pains we are at to serve God and glorify his name, more secure will be our title to his favour, and more great and distinguishing the degrees of our future reward and dignity—not to insist on these things; the force and merit of these excuses may be determined by this single and plain question; namely, whether the same

cause would keep us at home, were the house of God a place for holding a market or fair, where we might traffick for gain, or partake of any public diversions? or whether we in fact do not readily, and often, rise above these hindrances, when profit or entertainment invite us to the places of buying or selling, or to the houses of amusement and pleasure? If so; this plea is as weak as the former, betrays a prevailing indifference to God, and discovers an inordinate attachment to this world.

Considered in the most favourable light, it is commonly the plea of indolence and sloth, from which the awful awakening sanctions of religion should rouse us; if the gratitude and love of our souls to the best of beings is not ardent and lively enough to carry us superior to such slight inconveniences and sufferings, with which his service may be attended. Who of us would not be ashamed to urge this excuse; if we recollected the trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, of the loss of goods, of bonds and of imprisonments, which through their zeal for God and his house, multitudes of worthy confessors and martyrs have endured? Yet this plea is often suffered to prevail to the neglect of the public institutions of religion; especially when, as is frequently the case,

case, it is supported by the apology, by which others excuse their absence from the house of God, namely, in the

Third place, That by reading valuable discourses on the subjects of religious truth and practice, by the perusal of the scriptures and by private prayer, they can fill up the seasons of public worship at home, even more to their edification and pleasure than by an attendance on the social offices of devotion. Doubtless the application of the mind in retirement, to the services of piety and the study of the scriptures and of religion, is both a rational and necessary employment of our thoughts and time; but to make these duties a plea for the omission of the more public duties of religion justly raises some suspicions and fears, that even these are not attended to so seriously, so devoutly, as is pretended. For methinks the same principle of piety, the same desire of moral improvement, should urge us to go to the house of God, and carry us to the assemblies of his people.

But let charity believe, that the time, by others consecrated to the public, is spent in the private worship of God: still the excuse is weak, and the neglect is criminal. Hereby the promise

of our divine master and friend to bless, by his gracious presence, those who meet together in his name, is treated with contempt; as if we had no sense of its value, or no faith in its accomplishment. One clear and important duty, a duty grounded on the plainest principles of reason, and supported by the sanction of God's word, is omitted and violated. *One* apt and proper, *one* prescribed and necessary means of preserving the life and vigour of religion in the soul, is, with an unbecoming and dangerous indifference, neglected. We absurdly exclude the happy and pleasing influence of society from religion: when we readily endeavour to promote the success of the schemes of business, and to heighten the joys of amusement, by making both public and social.

They, who alledge this pretence, consider not, that instructive, judicious and pathetic discourses, read by themselves in retirement, want *some advantages*, which meaner discourses (if not wholly trifling and uninteresting) may claim, when delivered from the pulpit. For, whereas the *former* enter only by the *eyes*; the *latter* more sensibly awaken and command attention by striking upon the *ears*, whilst the sight of the speaker contributes to their force; if his manner is not particularly false and disgusting. They consider not that the
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warmth of devotion grows more ardent, by being mutual: and that they deprive themselves of that acceptance, with which God hearkens to the united prayers of the righteous.

And, which is of main weight to expose the weakness and guilt of this plea, hereby they withhold their public testimony to the perfections and government of God: this is not confessing CHRIST before men; but neglecting the most natural and effectual means of perpetuating his name, and of supporting his cause. Our retired and solitary devotion may have its advantages and pleasures; but it cannot teach and affect *others*. When hid from the world, it cannot enlighten the world; and the beauties of holiness cannot attract imitation, when they are not exposed to view.

On the whole, it may be left to their own reason and conscience to decide, whether private devotion, though of excellent use, can atone for the neglect of public. As to those who under this pretence actually fill up the hours of public worship with vain conversation, unseasonable walking, sleep, business, or any thing, rather than prayer to their Maker, can such forget the guilt, or not fear the effects of this vile hypocrisy? Or however *they* may forget it; let them not any

longer be deceived; God cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked!

Fourthly. The house of God is forsaken by others, because they imagine their knowledge is so clear and extensive, and their minds are so well informed, that they can expect to hear nothing from the preacher, but what they are well acquainted with already. However this apology may flatter themselves, it favours but little of humility and candour; and it is totally insufficient to justify their conduct. For let it be granted, that it would be highly improper for the preacher to insist on those topics, which would appear new to them; or to canvass religious matters so thoroughly, or to enter so deeply into them, as would entertain and improve their exalted and refined minds; since prudence and charity oblige him to insist upon those plain and common subjects, that are level to the capacity of unlearned hearers: yet there is that weight, that importance, that universal moment in the common and plainest subjects of religious instruction, that always gives them a claim to the serious regard of the most improved understandings. It will shew an amiable condescension, not to say a peculiar happiness of mind, to seek improvement from discourses beneath their judgment and taste. There is a great
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and material difference between the knowledge of the head, and the goodness of the heart: and notorious defects in the latter, often meet together with high attainments in the former. The public institutions of religion, though they might not advance that, would much tend to cure and remove these.

It must not be forgotten, nor can it be denied, that as to the truths we are fully acquainted with, they are too apt to slip from our memories: and, amidst a variety of worldly cares and delights, the impression of them too easily dies away from the mind. Though we cannot therefore be informed, we need to be put in remembrance of them: though we are established in the knowledge of them, it is highly necessary to recollect them.— To be reminded, and admonished of those things, we do know, will revive our sense of them, and give them new force and strength, new life and power.

Look, sirs! to JESUS CHRIST, the wisdom of God, and the glorious image of his purity and goodness. Did he consider his exalted views, his eminent holiness, as setting aside the obligations to, and usefulness of, public worship? No! you are very sensible, that while the night was frequently
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consecrated by him to private devotion, he always attended the services of the temple and synagogue, that he might do the will of his Father, and be an example to us. He has thus taught the wisest and best of us to put a great value upon the solemnities of God's house. He has taught us to follow his steps, by leaving an example of humility, obedience and zeal in this respect, that may instruct and edify others.

Here (our own improvement in knowledge and holiness set aside), *here* is one great motive, one undeniable obligation to the offices of social devotion; namely, that hereby we countenance religion, and appear *publicly* for God and virtue. It is a duty we owe to God, to use every method of preserving the belief and the lively apprehension of his good and venerable, of his kind and universal government in the earth. It is a duty we owe to *man*, to promote and encourage by our own practice an attendance upon the instrumental duties of religion; which are so expedient, so necessary for the instruction and improvement of the generality, and which actually are of considerable use to a part of them: a duty, to which our superior wisdom adds a peculiar obligation; for that will give our example weight, and render it more striking and efficacious.

But,

But, to dismiss this plea, it should be observed and remembered, it entirely leaves out and loses sight of *one principal part* of the employment and services of God's house, namely, *the exercises of devotion*. We assemble together to worship the Almighty, as well as to be instructed: we meet together not only to learn his will, but to adore his perfections, to celebrate his goodness and to implore his benediction on ourselves, our friends, our country, and on mankind.

This is an excellent service: this opens a source of continual improvement and joy: this resembles the employment of angels, and will constitute our noblest business in the world of perfection and bliss. By this we make mention of the loving-kindness of God, and advance his honour and glory.

On the whole, it may be replied to this excuse, in the words of a sensible writer, "That man
" who thinks himself too wise to be taught, gives
" so much evidence against himself, and proves
" that he is not so. And he who thinks himself
" above the ordinary means of religion, has never
" felt its proper influence on his heart. Con-
" versing with God is an employment in which a
" good

“good man will always find satisfaction and improvement*.”

Such are the pleas, by which men defend and justify an absence from the house of God. There is another excuse, rather different from those we have mentioned, but frequently improved into an occasion of strengthening the two last pleas; it is derived from the case of those who are so situated, that the immoralities of the preacher, or the errors and absurdities mingled with the public devotions, are great obstacles to their attendance on them. But this argument must lose in general much of its force: when it is considered, that in most parts of our country, numerous places of public worship are opened, not only by the connivance, but by *the authority*, of government; where none officiate as ministers, but who are appointed thereto by the voluntary choice of the people: and where the *devotions not being directed and restrained by human laws* †, room is left for continual improvements and corrections, and there is

* Webb's Sermons, Vol. II. p. 178.

† The author scarcely needs to observe, that he refers to the case of PROTESTANT DISSENTERS; whose principles are thus favourable to the knowledge and influence of true religion.

liberty to conduct them on the principles of reason and the gospel. These are material advantages ; and very favourable to the pleasures and efficacy of public worship : *Advantages* to be chearfully embraced, though at some expence and inconvenience, by them who are so far directed by reason and conscience, as to prefer the honour of the Deity, the purity of his worship, and their own best improvement, to ease and the love of money.

What weight and strength there is in any of these pleas ; let it be left to every candid and honest mind to determine. Not but they admonish the *ministers* of religion to use every method which pious zeal can suggest and wisdom dictate, to render the public devotions rational, solemn and fervent ; and their public instructions judicious and affecting : that they who forsake the house of God, may be invited to it by the clear prospects of profit and delight ; and may be allured by the beauties and decencies of holiness. Not but they admonish *all*, who conscientiously assemble together to support the ordinances of religion, to recommend them by their grave and composed behaviour in the performance, and by the visible effects of them in the purity and goodness of their tempers and lives : that the benefits and decorum,
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the reasonableness and advantages of public worship may be seen, admired, and felt.

Though after all we can do for its support and efficacy, this indifference to the house of God and its duties is a malady of too malignant a nature to be so cured. The apologies that have been now introduced and considered, there is too much reason to suspect, are mere pretences; under which the real cause is concealed. Give me leave to mention it, and to charge it on the conscience plainly.

Men are indifferent to religion: they are little concerned about the favour of God, and the happiness of the other world: therefore is the house of God forsaken. There is, in the heart, an inward settled indisposition to the serious offices of devotion: therefore are pleas framed and every idle excuse is laid hold of, by which they may appear to defend their absence from them.— Hence, when they do come to the house of God, whatever tends to awaken disgusts them. Their light and airy behaviour, during prayer, shows that the worship of God is far from their thoughts: and the easy manner, in which they purposely set themselves to sleep under the sermon, shows that they do not care to know the branches, or feel the obligations of religious virtue.

No

No wonder also, when they are conscious to no holy relish for the duties of devotion, and to no strong sense of eternal things, that they can easily satisfy themselves in a partial attendance on the house of God. The morning or afternoon's service, on the LORD'S Day, is frequently to give way to convenience, profit or pleasure: not to mention the *total neglect* of it on other days. *Six days* in the week shall be devoted to the calls of business and amusement, and scarcely *one day* can be allowed for those solemn services, in which it is our privilege and honour religiously to engage. It is reckoned to be righteous over-much, thus to employ *the whole* of this day.

To his own master and judge doth every man stand and fall: far be it from a Christian, and a preacher, rashly to pass sentence on any one! but certainly, if we were even half as eager about the service of God, and the concerns of a future, eternal state, as we are fondly busy about the things of this life, we should nor allow ourselves to be so often and so easily missing from the house of God. If there be a God who will reward them that diligently seek him—If the offices of a Mediator, through whom we are to present our addresses to the Almighty, and the ordinances of religious worship be the appointments of God—

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And if there be an eternal sabbath, a perfect and immortal rest, reserved for the people of God—If these things be so; we shall doubtless entertain very different thoughts of our absence from God's house *hereafter*, to what we *now* admit.

In a word, let us not forsake assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of too many is; but let us exhort one another to go up to the house of God: and so much the more, as ye see the *eternal day* approaching. So prepare your minds for the discoveries of the regions of knowledge and truth: and so learn the notes of angels; till you shall at length fall in with their songs, and join the choir of exalted and glorified spirits. *Amen.*

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S E R M O N VII.

The Influence of habitual Piety.

PROVERBS xxiii. 17.

BE THOU IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD ALL THE
DAY LONG.

B*y the fear of God* is meant that affectionate and grateful reverence, with which the mind of man ought to be possessed towards the Almighty Creator, the unfailing friend, the constant inspector and supreme judge of the world, and particularly of all rational creatures. If we bestow any serious reflexion on the character and perfections of the Almighty, and recollect the rich and numerous favours he is continually imparting, favours which every one shares, according to his capacity to improve and enjoy them, none can dispute the claims of God to the thankful adoration of every mind, formed to know and adore the author of his blifs. Nay, considering our constant connexion with the Deity, and his intimate knowledge of all our ways, this principle, of devout fear and grateful reverence, ought to be the leading and

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perpetual affection of the soul, the first, commanding and grand motive of our whole behaviour : as it is the most effectual restraint from every crime, the animating incentive to every instance of virtue, and a chearing support under every evil. This is what the wise man means by the exhortation to “ be in the fear of the LORD all the day long.”

But this is so important a subject, so important to the power, credit and comfort of religion, it is not to be dismissed with a few general hints ; but deserves a distinct illustration. The words of the text lead us to dwell on this part of a religious character, namely, its constant and daily influence on every rising event and circumstance of the day. Religion should show itself not only in the *devotions*, but in the *business and recreations* of the day : under the *providential events* of the succeeding hours of life, should it exert itself ; and in the *moments of our solitude* be our attendant.— In every one of these respects should a daily piety be exemplified : and it is our design, at present, to point out what effects religion should have on each.

And would to God, that whilst we pass through these particulars, each of us may be able to say from delightful experience, blessed be the great object

object of my fear, in this and in this respect, I have felt the power of genuine religion! Or may this discourse be succeeded by thy gracious operations, O Father of our spirits, to beget and improve the sentiments and power of an habitual piety. *Amen!*

First. In the *devotions* of the day will that fear of the LORD, in which we are to be found all the day long, exert itself. Without a deep and lively sense of God upon the mind, the services of piety will either be entirely neglected, or discharged with remissness and langour.

For then the obligations, incentives and encouragements to the duties of devotion are out of sight: they are scarcely attended to, or very slightly affect us. On the contrary, let us open our bosoms to the impressions of reverence and gratitude towards God, these affections will prompt us to approach his throne with diligence and fervor. The fear of God will naturally produce a serious concern for his protection, and a dread of his displeasure: whilst our daily experience of his goodness will animate the hope of the former, and a persuasion of his mercy will sweetly attemper the latter. The fear of God establishes such a turn and bias of heart, as is

an habitual preparation for the duties of devotion; and it forms that calmness of temper, which greatly assists the soul to compose and recollect itself at the stated, or occasional seasons, of divine worship.

In nothing will it discover its influence more, than in the manner of discharging the offices of piety: it will supply a variety of considerations to awaken every devout affection, to beget reverence and ardor. Our many and urgent necessities, our guilt and weakness, the numerous favours and blessings of which God is the source, and the noble hopes of immortality he can satisfy; these both furnish materials for devotion, and excite us to offer our praises heartily, and our prayers with earnestness.

But no thought can yield a superior motive to a holy care in the service of God, or more powerfully awaken us to guard against hypocritical formality, than this just solemn thought—a thought not less obvious than weighty; namely, “that, in every office of devotion, we address ourselves to the great Majesty of heaven and earth, who knows all our thoughts and beholds all our actions: and that we are in the immediate presence of this adorable being, who is very jealous
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“of his honour.” Would we, my friends, be in, and feel the fear of God in divine worship, whether public or domestic; let a moment be seized before we enter on such solemnities, to admit this reflexion: it will have an happy and strong influence to render our devotions such as we may on a review approve, and such as God will accept.

Let this, the acceptance of God, be the great object of our wishes; as it can be the only fit and consistent aim of our devotions. Hereby will our watchfulness and care be excited, not solely to the reverence of our manner, and the sincerity of our hearts, but to the sentiments and expressions we introduce in our prayers and praises: that they be such as may promote the reverence, esteem and gratitude due to the Deity, amongst men. To this purpose we must endeavour to gain right and just notions of the Deity, of religious virtue, and of happiness; for these give a tincture to our requests, and form the language of prayer.

In a word, the very disposition to the duties of divine worship proceeds from the grateful reverence of God, dwelling in the bosom. To secure the benefits and blessings of which devotion is the means, the fear of God will induce us to enter on its services with a serious pause, and with a

turn of the thoughts to God, in pious breathings after his help and acceptance : it will induce us to set a guard on our spirits, and to check the first wanderings, when engaged in these duties ; and to review them immediately, when concluded, and reflect whether we have worshipped him in that spirit and truth he demands. But,

Secondly, To be governed by religion, in *the business* of the day, is another thing implied by being in the fear of the LORD all the day long. It is highly absurd, nay, mischievous to lose sight of God, through the avocations of life and the hurry of its concerns : since the interests of this world are not repugnant to the services of God ; but one may be rendered subservient to the other. The sentiments and hopes of religion are needful to moderate the pursuit of earthly gain, and to sooth the cares of active life. Nay, scarcely any thing, not even the prospect of increasing wealth, can inspire that vigour, animate to that diligence, and administer that pleasure in the prosecution of our business, whether the labours of the hand, or of learned life, which genuine and habitual religion will produce.

Religion does, in some measure, spiritualize and ennoble the common and lowest labours of life.

life. For it leads us to regard the Almighty, as the author of that manly firmness, which fits the husbandman for his toils; of that ingenuity and skill, which has so variously multiplied its effects in the workmanship of the artificer; of that rich abundance of materials for industry and labour, the earth pours forth from all its store-houses; and of that success and wealth, with which the toils of the field and of the shop are repayed.— Listen to the calm voice, and rational dictates of religion; the author of all is divine.

Religion teaches you, Christians, to regard your several situations in life, whether those of superior or lower rank, as the allotments of his providence, and the stations to which his wisdom has appointed you. “The rich and the poor meet together, but the LORD is the maker of them all.” The time of life, which is the season of activity and vigour, is in his hands; and at his pleasure is abridged and lengthened out. The different businesses and occupations of life gives scope for the exertion of that strength, to which the power of God has formed the body, and for the display of that understanding, with which the inspiration of the Almighty has endowed the spirit. By them are men provided with the means of generosity and

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kindness;

kindness ; with the means of enjoying life with decency or elegance ; or with the materials of grateful offerings to the glory of God. In so many important and sacred views, does religion place our worldly business.

And it moreover expressly gives us lessons of diligence, and application to it. “ Ye are taught “ of God,” observes an apostle, “ that you study “ to be quiet, and to do your own business, and “ to work with your own hands ; that you may “ walk honestly towards them that are without, “ and that you may have lack of nothing.” And in this manner therefore does he address himself to the idle: “ We hear that there are some among “ you, who walk disorderly, working not at all, “ but are busy bodies : now them that are such, “ we command and exhort by our LORD JESUS “ CHRIST, that with quietness they work and eat “ their own bread.”

Feel we then the truth and power of these principles—do we wish to comport with the spirit and genius of real religion—we shall set to the prosecution of our worldly business with a sense of God’s authority, and with a regard to his glory: avoiding that dreaming, sluggish, indolent temper, which

which nods over its work ; avoiding those snares and sensual indulgences which would rob us of our time and unfit us for our employment, we shall apply to it with vigour and diligence. We shall manage it with truth and integrity, remembering that “ the unjust weight and lying lips are “ an abomination to the LORD.” We shall watch against its temptations, with humble caution, and with an holy fortitude resist them. We shall expend its profits with innocence and temperance, or consecrate them to benevolence and piety ; whilst we shall be habitually sensible of our need of the divine blessing to prosper our labours.— And as the busy, so the pleasing scenes of life are not to be exempted from the influence and guidance of religion. For that,

Thirdly, Our *recreations and amusements* be governed by the fear of God, is another thing implied by being therein all the day long. The fear of God, when it prevails with life and constancy, will almost continually present to our thoughts those sublime, serious and awful truths ; which will give a composure and gravity to the mind : and, without frequent recollection and calm thought, the fear of God cannot be produced or maintained. But this disposition to think, to make frequent and serious pauses in life, this turn
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of the mind to divine and heavenly objects, will give a relish for solid and manly pleasures, and cause us to look with indifference, if not contempt, on that round of empty and giddy diversions; which bars out every worthy reflexion, and enfeebles the vigour of the soul.

When religious principles and hopes, to any degree, delight and sway the heart, none but innocent diversions will be chosen: and they will be indulged only so far as the rules of prudence and moderation will allow; may I not say, only so far as our schemes for immortality and our heavenly pleasures can bear. Amusement will not be with us that dull and empty thing it is with those, with whom it is their sole concern and employment. It will diversify life, and whilst it soothes our fatigues, it will afford us a recruit of spirits and vigour, for a renewed application to the labours of life, or the duties of religion.

The readiness with which the devout mind frequently turns to the great author of good, will not be entirely lost in the hours of diversion.—Our very recreations, our capacities to taste their enlivening joys, and the variety of objects which furnish out an agreeable relaxation from the wearisome scenes of busy life, these will be regarded

regarded as proofs of our Creator's goodness, as pledges of our heavenly Father's indulgence to the weakness of our frame, which cannot support a long and uninterrupted application to business and labour.

That good intention, with which we seek them, in subordination to the honour of God and our usefulness in life, is a proper expression of our fear of the Almighty ; and will even exalt them into the rank of services to him. A just concern not to offend the Deity, will put us on our guard ; that, if our recreations are of a social nature, nothing malignant, envious, passionate or unkind should appear in our words or temper. It will put us on our watch that nothing, through our fault, should convert what a gracious God allows of, as a sweetner of life, and a cement of friendship, into an occasion of bitterness, folly or mischief.

It may be added, that a reverence for the Almighty, and a prevailing desire of his favour, will so regulate our behaviour in the seasons of amusement and relaxation, so determine their nature and length, that we may not be ashamed or afraid, at the close and review of them, to implore his blessing on the use thereof, and gratefully

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to acknowledge his kindness in the diversions of life. This we may do, with a rational and warm devotion, if we ever remember "to indulge ourselves in amusements and diversions no farther, than as they make a part in a scheme of rational and manly, benevolent and pious conduct*." To proceed,

Fourthly. A devout notice of its *events and occurrences*, is another thing meant by being in the fear of the LORD all the day long. This appears to be evidently alluded to in the text. For, as in the course of human affairs, we can not fail to meet with many instances of prosperous wickedness, and of sinners rejoicing in an abundance of good, the wise man prescribes a constant and awful sense of God on the mind, as a preservative against envy of their success, or an imitation of their conduct, through the hope of securing the like. "Let not thy heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long."

But this lively, habitual sense of God will not merely restrain from every thing malignant and sinful; it will kindle the better and generous

* Dr. Doddridge.

affections.

affections. For instance, do pleasing and agreeable events diffuse smiles and joys around us, religion will fill the heart with devout gratitude, and open our mouths with songs of praise to the source of every good gift. The refreshment of sleep, the safety in which we pass the hours of darkness, the chearful appearance nature again resumes at the opening morning, the renewed exercise of our rational powers, the provision of warm and decent apparel, the prospects of usefulness and enjoyment opening upon us with the beginning of every day, and the hopes of that eternal day of happiness and glory, to which the days of our mortal life are introductory, these things must be all received and acknowledged, as effects of the divine wisdom and goodness.

The progress of the day will furnish new occasions of thankfulness, and exhibit new and successive proofs of God's, not less gracious than awful, presence and government, which a pious mind will see and feel. The light and warmth of the sun, the health that blooms in our cheeks and braces our nerves, the provision that spreads our table, the children who fondly clasp our knees, the accommodations that endear our earthly dwelling, the friends whose kind and chearful looks gladden the soul, the books that entertain and improve

improve us with their instructive pages, the journies that have been secured from alarming accidents and painful disasters, our opportunities for exercising virtue, and for a growth in wisdom and goodness—these should be considered as, constant and unfailing, tokens of the divine care over us, and should fill us with grateful wonder to behold and taste in so many agreeable instances, how dear we are to our Maker!

Not but the dark and gloomy scenes of *affliction* show a present God. And it is the happiness, as well as a branch of a religious temper, to regard *them* as the corrections of his paternal rod, not the signs of his hatred, or neglect of us. Every disappointment, every loss, every pain, must be considered as having a useful part in that plan of education; by which our heavenly parent is training us up to wisdom and eternal life. There are some important graces, which afflictions are the most proper, if not the only, means of calling into exercise and carrying to perfection. Mutual compassion, alms-giving, patience and resignation, are the fruits of adversity; not to say, that distress and sorrow more sensibly teach us the value of our remaining mercies, and beget a lively relish for the blissful regions of immortality.

And

And surely there can be no settled regard to God, but little devout respect to his will and government, where there is not a serious and daily care to cherish a temper, that may correspond to the rising events of life. Meekness under provocations from men, submission under calamities from the hand of God, under our losses heavenly hopes and thankfulness for our mercies, is the most becoming and pious method of answering the purposes of the divine government, and of actually bringing about those great ends of moral improvement, and of final perfection and bliss, that are the aims of the Almighty's over-ruling wisdom and power. To proceed.

Lastly. The pious direction of our *thoughts in our solitude*, is another thing implied by being in the fear of the Lord all the day long.—

“Thoughts,” says Dr. Young, according to the usual boldness of his expression, “are heard in heaven.” It is certain on the plainest deductions of reason, and on the clearest declarations of scripture, that Almighty God “knoweth our down sitting and up rising, and understandeth our thoughts afar off; that he compasseth our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways.” And it is equally certain, that
nothing

nothing to a *good* mind can be more delightful; to a *wicked* mind more awful; and to *every one* more interesting and awakening, than this thought—that “God is the Inspector and Judge
“of our retirements and of all the imaginations
“of the heart.”

In consequence of this solemn truth, another object of pious attention offers itself, namely, the management of our thoughts and affections in solitude. And when religion gives us the command of *them*, and quickens us to this instance of self-government, it affords a striking evidence of the strength and sincerity of our fear of God. It may be added, that on this the peace and purity of our own breast, the innocence, virtue and usefulness of our lives in a very considerable degree depend. “Keep thy heart with all diligence,” advises the royal preacher; for, as he subjoins, “out of the heart are the issues of life.” Let it then be our endeavour to *think*, as becomes those who fear the LORD.

Such will not admit and harbour any unkind sentiments of others, any impure ideas, any fraudulent schemes, or any imaginations of vanity and pride: but they will invite and entertain, embrace and pursue those thoughts, that will raise their
pious

pious and enlarge their benevolent affections.— Sometimes their solitude will be improved into a sacred season of devout converse with God; now they will range through the spacious field of divine knowledge and truth: and now, on the wings of contemplation and faith, they will soar on high and traverse the regions of purity, light and bliss. At other times they will call their actions and life to the tribunal of conscience, examine the witnesses, wait the verdict, and submit to the sentence.— Now they devise liberal things, or again form the purposes of pious virtue, or lay some scheme of usefulness and service. And when the desultory, wandering mind hastens from one subject of reflexion to another, without dwelling long enough on any to derive pleasure or profit from it, the last sermon they have heard, or the last portion of scripture they have read shall be recollected to lend its assistance to the improvement of the solitary moments, and to fix the attention on some agreeable and edifying theme.

This reminds me of the direction of the excellent Dr. Doddridge to a friend on this point.— It is “to select some one verse of scripture which he had met with in the morning, and to treasure it up in his mind, resolving to think on that at any time when he should be at a loss for matter

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“ of pious reflexion in any intervals of leisure
 “ for entering upon it. This,” he observes, “ will
 “ be often as a spring ; from whence many profi-
 “ table and delightful thoughts will arise ; which
 “ perhaps we did not see before in that con-
 “ nection and force. Or, it should not be so ;
 “ yet I am persuaded it will be much better to
 “ repeat the same scripture in our minds an
 “ hundred times in a day with some pious ejacu-
 “ lations formed upon it ; than to leave our
 “ thoughts at the mercy of all those various tri-
 “ fles, which may otherwise intrude upon us :
 “ the variety of which will be far from making
 “ amends for their vanity*.”

This seems to be the manner of spending each day intimated in the text : or these things may be very properly included under the exhortation, “ to be in
 “ the fear of the LORD all the day long.” Religion must accompany us through all the occurrences of the day. Our devotions, our business, our recreations, the providences of the day and the moments of solitude must all feel its energy.

Thus, my dear friends, thus be it our aim to spend our days. This habitual regard to God, to his

* Dr. Doddridge's Rise and Progress, ch. xix. § 18.

authority

authority and acceptance, in every circumstance, must be meant by the expressions of "walking with God," of "setting the LORD always before us," and especially by that of "loving the LORD our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." Much might be said to urge and recommend it. The constant inspection and presence of his pure and infinite Majesty; his constant friendly regard to us, a condescending regard for our welfare that runs through every day and every moment of life, doubtless demand of us a daily and hourly regard to his will and favour. But, Christians, it must be left to you to feel these obligations, and to make the happy experiment of their pleasure and benefit. "O taste and see, that the ways of the LORD are good:" this course will conduce to the comfort and usefulness of life. Pursue it with increasing care and vigour; yours, you will find, are the joys of benevolence and gratitude—yours, afflictions soothed with the richest consolations—yours, the charms of an attractive model of pious virtue—yours, the pleasure of an approving conscience and an approving God. These delights and advantages will be concluded with the serene dignity and calm joys of peace and hope in death, and will be succeeded by the delights and glories of a blissful eternity! *Amen.*

S E R M O N VIII.

The Happiness that flows from religious
Trust*.

PSALM xxxiv. 8.

O TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD:
BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT TRUSTETH IN
HIM.

THE scriptures afford us the clearest and
sublimest views of the divine perfections:
but the perfection, dwelt on with a peculiar em-
phasis, to which they again and again return with
high delight, and celebrate in the noblest strains,
is the *goodness* of God.

[The Deity himself has not only displayed this
attribute in a variety of the kindest effects; but
has, as it were, showed himself anxious to give
the fullest and most encouraging proofs of his

* This discourse was preached at the funeral of a pious
worthy young man, Mr. George Stone, who died of a
lingering consumption at the age of 25.

great benevolence: that not any doubt or suspicion of it might harbour in the human mind: that the soul might be sweetly allured to the love of God: that our obedience might be our choice and pleasure: and that the strong and numerous evidences of his goodness might serve as a generous antidote to relieve the gloom and sorrow, with which the evils of life might in any season affect us, and as a soothing balm to heal the spirit wounded with affliction and grief.]

The persuasion that this perfection dwells in the Almighty, and reigns through all the designs of his government, is the spring of true religion and chearful homage: the foundation of calm repose and an incentive to steady confidence amidst all changes and events, under every thing we feel and every thing we fear. "How excellent," says the psalmist, "is thy loving kindness: therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." And, in the text, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." In the words are two points.

First. That the goodness of God renders the condition of that man, who trusts in him, happy.

Secondly.

Secondly. The psalmist's invitation to taste and see the divine goodness. On these two points I would insist, and then apply the words to the present affecting occasion.

First, I would show, that the goodness of God renders the condition of that man, who trusts in him, happy.

[The pious psalmist having recorded the gracious interposition of the divine providence for his support and relief, under some distressing and threatening occurrence, takes occasion, from his own experience of the mercy of God, to invite others to those exercises of devout hope and confidence, which in his particular case had been so richly and suitably repayed. This invitation to taste the goodness of God, is followed and supported by a general reflexion on the happiness of those who trust in him. The manner in which this reflexion is introduced, clearly points out the goodness of the Deity, as the ground and security, the spring and cause of the felicity of the man who confides in him. "O taste and see that the LORD is good : blessed is the man that trusteth in him.]

The idea of an almighty, supreme and eternal Sovereign and LORD astonishes and abases, if it

does not affright the soul: it is the exercise of this amazing power and supreme authority, in the protection and welfare of the creatures and subjects of the Great LORD of All, that pleases and delights the heart, that encourages and attracts our hope towards him. Happy the man, whom these animating sentiments of the Deity teach to trust in him, with a calm and full submission to the providence of the Almighty, and a steady, cheerful application to his patronage and care. For the goodness of GOD effectually secures to him,

1. *Compassion and a favourable answer to his prayers.* This thought seems to have been particularly in the psalmist's view; for, in verses 4, 15, 17, he expressly introduces it. "I sought the LORD and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous; they cry, and the LORD heareth them." This thought, with a delightful emphasis, occurs in other passages.

[There are two, which lie so obviously to our notice, and which are so pregnant with comfort and peace, you will with pleasure permit the recollection. The first you find in 1 Pet. v. 7. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." The other we meet with, Phil. iv. 6, 7. "Be careful for nothing: but in every thing

“ thing by prayer and supplication ; with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God : and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and mind “ in CHRIST JESUS.”]

But no passage gives us a more clear, or more affecting view of this thought, than the short, but convincing and endearing account of the compassions of God, in Psalm ciii. 13. “ Like as a father pitieth his children ; so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.” Parents, whose eyes have swelled with tears of tenderness, and whose hearts have yearned with compassion over their sick and languishing babes, have in their own bosoms a pledge and *specimen* of the tender mercies of our heavenly parent ; who, with like pity, listens to every prayer, and feels every groan of his rational offspring.

That the Almighty beholds and regards him with pity, the devout man has no more doubt of, than he has of his wants and sorrows. He knows that God is the author of all those tender mercies, of which the human heart is susceptible ; because the human soul owes its existence and all its capacities, to feel and sympathize, to his power and pleasure. He knows, that God condescends to provide

provide food for the fowls of the air, and to preside over the fall of a sparrow. He knows, that God saw a world sunk into guilt and sin, with such warm compassion; that he raised up that most glorious and excellent person JESUS CHRIST to labour, suffer and die for its recovery. He finds that his soul under every sense of weakness, under every grief and fear, naturally, of its own accord, sends up its thoughts and wishes above; a strong presumption, that God, who gave it this tendency to heaven for help, who teaches it thus to breathe after divine succour and protection, will befriend and visit him with his tender mercies. The devout man further knows, that the LORD of this and the other world will grant an existence in a future and better state: where there will be no sorrow, nor pain; no difficulties to embarrass, no fears to alarm. From all these principles he draws this cheering conclusion; that his case whatever it is, is known, is commiserated by God: a conclusion that makes him happy in his own breast; for it softens every sorrow, and lightens every load.

Who has not felt it to be a great happiness; if, under some oppressive calamity, any good man or gentle friend condescended to hear the painful tale of woe and sorrow, appeared to be touched with

with it, interrupted it with his own tears and sympathy, and assisted him to go through the piercing detail with words of consolation, and offers of help. Now if human compassions (partial, selfish and weak as they are), when streaming out from the friendly or parental heart, communicate relief, nay, mingle pleasures with our grief, and brighten, with a soft joy, the countenance bedewed with sorrow; how happy is the man, whose devout confidence moves the compassions of God; compassions, which, flowing from infinite original benevolence, are full, rich and lasting. *They* are divine; the compassions of an ever present and ever gracious parent and friend.

2. The goodness of God *will secure all necessary assistance and support* to the man, who trusts in him: a circumstance that renders his condition truly happy. "The LORD is nigh
 "unto them that are of an upright heart; and
 "saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. He
 "keepeth all their bones, that not one of them is
 "broken," ver. 18, 20. The compassions of God are not vain and ineffectual, as those of man too often prove. In our heavenly parent and friend unites every attribute, for the proper display of his tender mercies: almighty power, universal presence, all-animating energy, with
 unerring

unerring wisdom render him equal to the relief and support of all his creatures; various as are their cases, numerous as their wants, and aggravated as their distresses. There is not a creature, there is not a place but what feels his supporting presence; seeing he giveth to all, life, breath, and all things:

The natural strength of human spirits, the kindness and succour of friends, and the provision which the accommodations of life, and our share of earthly blessings yield for our assistance and support, may do something; may contribute much to sooth our sorrows and lighten our burdens, to cheer and fortify the mind under gloomy scenes and threatening prospects. But there are cases and degrees of suffering, which these emollients cannot reach or alleviate.

To instance in one, a distemper seizes the vital parts; the skill of the physician, and the power of medicine fail; no soft attendance of friendship, no tears of love can sooth the raging fever; days of languishing are succeeded by wearisome nights; every breath forces a groan; and profuse sweats hasten the decay of the emaciated frame. Here human affection feels its weakness, and is distressed by its inability to communicate relief and support:

support: but here religious confidence displays its triumphs, and reigns with the happiest influence. Animated by its expectations from God, animated by the prospects he unfolds and the consolations he imparts through the gospel, *the soul* is vigorous and healthy, notwithstanding the pains and decays of the frail body; and frequently when faith and hope rise high, the most distressing nights have been the beginning of heaven to the mind*.

Or, in other instances, the care of our divine patron, to those who take refuge in his government and protection, is exercised in different methods: an unexpected turn is given to our affairs; unthought of steps or measures of conduct are suggested; friends whose names a little before were unknown are raised up; new sources of light, strength and comfort are opened. So wisely, so graciously does our heavenly Father temper our temptations and our vigour; and suit his communications to our wants. The salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in a time of trouble.

Numbers can bear their chearful testimony to this truth. Hear the language of the psalmist,

* Doddridge's Life, ch. viii. § 6. p. 239, &c. 8vo. and ch. ix. p. 334.

and

and from the composure and steadiness of his mind learn the happiness of those, who trust in the LORD. "The LORD is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid. Though an host encamp against me, my heart shall not fear : though war should rise up against me in this will I be confident. I will not be afraid of ten thousand of people, that have set themselves against me round about : Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : Thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Hear the triumph of the apostle. "And he has said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness : most gladly therefore," he adds, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of CHRIST may rest upon me."

This privilege of divine succour is not peculiar to a few eminent saints. It is secured to every devout man, to every one who trusts in the Almighty, by the faithfulness and promise of God : and it flows from his goodness, which is universal over all the works of his hands. "Fear not," says God to his ancient church of Israel, [a promise designed for the comfort of every individual, who composed that happy province of the divine care,]

"Fear

“ Fear not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed
“ for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee ; I will
“ help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the
“ right hand of my righteousness.” Not less
adapted to every case is the like enlivening
declaration of the New Testament. “ God is
“ faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted
“ above that you are able : but will with the
“ temptation make a way for your escape, that
“ you may be able to bear it.” Besides these
gracious promises, in great condescension to the
weakness of our minds, to the tenderness of our
spirits, under circumstances of fear and affliction,
God the Father of mercies hath appointed JESUS
CHRIST to be our compassionate high-priest, has
invited, and commanded us through him to “ come
“ boldly to the throne of grace ; that we may ob-
“ tain mercy and find grace to help in every time
“ of need.”

Is not the man blessed who trusteth in God,
and whose bosom is inspired with these rational
and animating prospects and hopes ? Wait then,
sirs ! on the LORD ; dismiss all apprehensions and
fears, in every emergency take courage ; and
“ he shall strengthen thy heart ; wait, I say, on
“ the LORD.” It is another distinguishing ingre-
dient and favourable circumstance in the happiness
and

portion of those, whose refuge is in the protection and providence of the Almighty,

3. 'That, *they shall receive at last a full and triumphant deliverance* out of all their calamities. With this sentiment is the text introduced, and the psalm concludes with it.

["The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them, that fear him, and delivereth them: O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. The LORD re- deemeth the soul of his servants, and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate." In common with the rest of mankind, the best and worthiest persons meet with the evils and calamities, which are the expedient and useful appendages of the present state.]

All the course of nature must be altered; every thing that relates to this world must change its nature, before the righteous can be exempted from the the disadvantages and distresses incident to this scene. The only distinction they can reasonably desire, and which, by divine confidence and pious virtue, they may undoubtedly secure,

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is fortitude to sustain, and wisdom to improve their afflictions whilst they continue: and, when they have answered the valuable purposes for which they were sent, a seasonable release from them. This distinction and privilege, by every dictate of reason and by all the precious promises with which scripture abounds, they are led to forebode to themselves.

The very temper and dispositions of their minds, towards the all-powerful and benign Sovereign of the world, is a token of good to them: a token, that the events of life have attained with them the great intention of that holy power, which overrules all things; and therefore a token, that those distresses which have produced a conformity and full submission to his government, will be removed. Having executed the errand on which they were sent, as the messengers of pious wisdom and the executioners of the divine corrections, they will be recalled.

Many, I know, can confirm this reasoning by their own observation and experience of the wisdom and kindness of providence. They recollect, with sentiments of wonder and gratitude, those seasons of life in which, when the threatening and distressing prospect of some calamity has impressed

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them with a deep sense of their dependence on God, and has brought their soul into a sweet harmony of resignation to his will, as most wise and gracious ; then has the gloom been scattered and the approaching evil been averted, though just ready to burst on their heads with all its weight and sorrow. Say, then, is not that man, with the utmost propriety, pronounced blessed, whose faith, resignation and hope are indulged with the reward of staying the hand of the Almighty, and preventing the evil which he feared.

But those temporal deliverances, with which they are by the over-ruling power of God visited, bear no proportion to that complete and triumphant redemption, which awaits them hereafter. Every release, every mitigation of their trouble at present is a pledge of that pure and perfect recovery and release ; in which their spirits shall rejoice in a happier world. Let the flesh with hastening decay consume ; let the heart fail : still God is the strength of their heart ; God is their portion for ever. From circumstances of the lowest humiliation, from corruption and the grave, shall his voice call them to life, vigour and joy. His hand shall conduct them to the regions of peace and felicity, and his favour shall raise them to honour and security everlasting.

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There the pale face, the languid body, the feeble joints, weak infancy, decrepit age, painful or pining sickness, awakening fears and consuming cares will never be known. They shall no longer trust the Almighty with wavering diffidence: no longer shall dark suspicions check the ardor of their hope: no longer shall sighs interrupt their prayers. For all shall be light about them: every tear shall be wiped away from the eye; and every prospect of evil shall be removed to an infinite distance from that blest abode. There every thing will display the power and excellency of the love and friendship of their God. There every thing will contribute to establish, improve and heighten their felicity and joy. Enraptured with the favour of the eternal father, and born away with the delight that flows incessant from the throne of God, they shall in a sublimer sense adopt the words of the Jewish church. "Lo! this is our God, we have waited for him, and he shall save us: this is the LORD, we have waited for him; we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation."

And now what shall we say to these things? Happy, thrice happy are they; whose hope is stayed on the LORD their God; whose soul trusts in him. What effect shall these things have upon

us? What bias do they give the mind? Do they not dispose us to make trial of his loving kindness, and to put our trust under the shadow of his wings? This leads me,

Secondly, To urge the *invitation* of the psalmist. "O taste and see that the LORD is good." Let me persuade you to commit your ways to him and to put yourselves under his protection and care. Need I observe to this audience, who are favoured with a clear discovery of the terms of salvation, and the condition of every divine blessing; that this confidence in God, this gladdening experience of his mercy, is not the privilege of all men without exception; not of all who may make their boast of it, and venture to lay a claim to it.

The psalmist himself, in a few verses after the text, has guarded his encomiums on the happiness of a devout dependent on God from every abuse, by a most awful declaration. "The face
"of the LORD" (says he, in contrast to the happiness of the righteous) "is against them that do
"evil." And as he invites us to taste the goodness of God, he has also pointed out the paths which are brightened with the love and crowned with the blessings of the Almighty. "Come ye
"children

“ children, hearken unto me ; I will teach you
 “ the fear of the LORD : keep thy tongue from
 “ evil, and thy lips from speaking guile : depart
 “ from evil and do good ; seek peace and
 “ pursue it.”

[On the ground of these declarations of divine truth we assert, that when the heart is corrupted with vicious affections, and the life stained with sinful habits, to talk of our experience of the divine goodness is vile hypocrisy ; and, without forsaking our evil ways and thoughts, to trust in God is daring and dangerous presumption. “ To them who order their conversation aright, will the salvation of God be “ shewn.” Every impenitent sinner acts *against* God : is it not extremely insolent and profane for such to rely on the protection of this almighty and holy Sovereign ?]

Lay then, sirs ! deep repentance of heart and life, at the foundation of all your future trials of the divine goodness and care. Here begin to form and raise the habits of entire resignation and chearful trust, in his protection and government.

Your condition is such as needs this stay ; as calls for all the consolations divine confidence

can inspire, and wants all the blessings it can yield. Infancy is helpless: youth is giddy: manhood is short sighted: and age infirm. Our capacities are limited; our progress in knowledge is slow; our enquiries are pursued under great prejudices and disadvantages; and many things lie beyond the ken of our search. Numerous are the evils, against which we cannot, by any caution or prudence, provide: numerous are the calamities, which unassisted, we cannot support.

Beauty fades; sickness impairs our strength; years enfeeble; riches are not proof against time and chance; men deceive; our worthiest friends die and leave us. Our reason may fail us, or our health forsake us: it may be the interest of men to injure us; or poverty may render us forlorn and destitute. Through negligence and false views, our duty is not known, or is forgotten; sinful actions load the soul with guilt, and debase and pollute its heavenly powers; the maxims of the world pervert the judgment; and the influence of example seduces the heart. Temptations assault with violence, and every stage of life is exposed to them. We feel our condition to be indigent, liable to perpetual wants, and perpetual fears. And the constitution and frame of the world around us is uncertain and precarious:

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our expectations fail, and our joys desert us; besides this, it is not the least affecting proof of the weakness and necessities of human nature, that death follows in the rear. Its stroke cannot be evaded; but its approach is uncertain; its message is to be feared, and its consequences are awful.

Eternal thanks to the Father of Mercy, amidst all these disadvantages and calamities, we know that his goodness is a constant, supreme and universal source of help, comfort and strength.—What wants so pressing, which it cannot relieve? What difficulties so great, out of which it cannot extricate us? What desires so large, it cannot satisfy? What blessings too rich and valuable for infinite benevolence to bestow? It will assist us to conquer even death.

Need I then be importunate with you, to secure his divine and gracious protection? You feel your own indigence: you believe the all-sufficiency and grace of God. Your own hearts, surely, with this conviction, and this encouraging faith, make the application. “O taste and see that the LORD is good.” This friendly advice of the psalmist is the dictate of prudence; your necessities urge, as your happiness invites, a submission to it.—

Do not, I beseech you, resist the call : embrace the offers of God's care with thankfulness, and experience for yourselves, how blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

You have now heard an humble attempt to illustrate, and prove the happiness of this man from the very *nature* of his *character* and *situation*. But, dear sirs, I have in my thoughts, and have lately had before my eyes, a more affecting, and a more *sensible proof and instance* of the happiness of an humble dependent on God's providence and care.

Our deceased friend trusted in the LORD, and he was in the number of those, who are blest in the consolations of this divine trust. He felt and exemplified the power of godliness : his regard for its forms was serious and regular. He was, notwithstanding the temptations and snares of early life, remarkable for sobriety of manners, and for integrity, diligence and fidelity in the dispatch of business. His conduct secured him the confidence and respect of all those with whom he had formed any connections; a proof that his pretensions to piety were as sincere and influential, as they were eminent. He did indeed serve God and JESUS CHRIST; and he felt much, very much

much of the hopes and satisfactions of religion and the gospel.

Through a long and tedious sickness, he very frequently expressed the strongest persuasion of, and breathed forth his gratitude for the goodness of God. The goodness of God was his repeated and constant theme. This very sickness, painful and lingering as it was, he devoutly regarded as one instance of God's goodness to him, one of the greatest mercies of his life. He had made it the business of his active days to secure his reconciliation with God: the approach of death brought no terrors with it. He expected his death: he wished for it, and talked of it with longing desires, and ardent, joyful hopes: he considered it, and spoke of it in this engaging and gladdening view, of going into the company and presence of his God and Redeemer. The acknowledgments of devout gratitude were the last accents, which his dying lips pronounced. In his expiring moments, when his weak frame had been torn with dissolving pangs, "I cannot be thankful enough to God," said he, and breathed his last.

Knowing that the hour was coming, when he could not with his own voice say any thing more
for

for God: he was desirous of engaging the assistance of mine, which might also reach farther. He requested that his death might be improved, as an occasion of addressing you on the goodness of God, and the happiness of those who trust in him. He was solicitous to leave with us his dying testimony to the excellency and importance of a godly, virtuous life, to the pleasures of such a course, and to the happiness of those, in particular, who in early years make God their portion. The dear, pious young man, whose remains are there enclosed*, being dead yet speaketh: speaketh to you these cheering words, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

May the God of all grace give you, my young friends; may he give us all ears to hear, and a heart to feel this, his dying, admonition: that you may share the happiness he enjoyed; and that when you come to die, you may leave the like honourable testimony to the wisdom and felicity of a godly life, and the like engaging charge to your weeping relations and friends. *Amen.*

* The corpse was rested in the meeting during the time of service.

S E R M O N IX.

Reflexions on the Death of Youth*.

LUKE vii. 12.

NOW WHEN HE CAME NIGH TO THE GATE OF THE CITY, BEHOLD, THERE WAS A DEAD MAN CARRIED OUT, THE ONLY SON OF HIS MOTHER, AND SHE WAS A WIDOW: AND MUCH PEOPLE OF THE CITY WAS WITH HER.

WHEN this affecting occurrence happened, our compassionate Master was entering a city called Naim. According to the account geographers give of the situation of this town, it was at some considerable distance from Capernaum, where he had rested the preceding night. The length of the journey, with some other circumstances, brought him into the city towards the evening. Here he met a funeral, attended with evident appearances of peculiar distress and

* This discourse was occasioned by the death of an amiable youth, Master Nathaniel Jeffries, whose opening virtues were very promising.

respect;

respect ; that served to call forth his compassion and illustrate his divine power. " Behold ! there " was carrying out the corpse of a youth : he was " the only son of his mother, and she a widow." It was followed by the afflicted woman, bathed in tears, and by a great multitude of sympathizing friends and acquaintance.

[So tender a scene could not fail of touching the heart of the good JESUS. He addresses the distressed mother with a kind affection, and unsolicited displays his sincere compassion and sacred energy ; stopping the bier, he says, with an amiable modesty and divine authority ; *Young man, I say unto thee, arise.* Those few words are no sooner uttered, than the deceased youth arises and speaks. Without shewing him round in ostentation and parade, he immediately delivers him to his mother, to testify the generous pleasure he took in her returning joy.

This miracle was an engaging exercise of our LORD's character, both as to his power and goodness. The multitude of people, who conducted this corps to the silent repository of the dead, prevents all suspicion, that the youth was not dead ; since to manage with success a fraud, in which so many must have been concerned, is
absolutely

absolutely impossible. The accidental manner, in which this funeral was met by CHRIST forbids any apprehension of a collusion between him and the friends of the young man.

Though doubtless this, like the other miracles of our LORD, was wrought to manifest the works of God : yet the humble and affectionate temper with which it was performed, leads us to admire the modesty and humanity of CHRIST, no less than his power. Here are no pomp of words, no marks of vain glory, no desire of amazing the croud ; but all is conducted with an unaffected freedom and simplicity : his astonishing authority is softened, or, as it were, veiled under the robe of humility and the condescensions of the sympathizing friend. Amiable specimen this of the tenderness of our great Master, who learnt from being a companion in woe to be touched with a sense of our infirmities and to have compassion on those who are afflicted.]

And alas ! how often are our spirits tried with cases of distress, in one respect or other, similar to that in the text. The death of youth, and of lovely and deserving youth, is not an uncommon event. The different stages of human life furnish out their several instances of that universal mortality,

mortality, which reigns over snowy age and blooming vigour. This law spares no ranks or dispositions: it gives not, to vice, a space for repentance; nor knows how to indulge amiable virtue: with an undistinguishing and an un pitying eye, death seizes Absalom aiming at his father's throne; and the son, the only son of his widowed mother. A loss of this kind is peculiarly deplorable; and if in any case we are able to secure others from going down to the grave, we should be ready to exercise our healing power for those, who are growing up the delight of their acquaintance, the hope of society, and the joy of their parents; such, whose dutiful affection was the support of a widowed mother; whose opening virtues revive in the languor of our age the pleasures and hopes of early life, and lead us in our warm prospects to regard every such youth as the future friend of religious liberty, a blessing to the trading community and the good man.—But the great Arbiter of life and death disposes of them in a way very different, to what our partial views and blinded affections would dictate. In his unerring wisdom, he takes away, by a stroke, the rising support of pious virtue, the hope of society, and the parent's worthy darling. We cannot certainly penetrate into the design of these measures: but we shall more perfectly know them hereafter. At present, whoever will

will consider this fact; which is too evident not to be owned, and too distressing not to move our tender feelings; he will, even, in this dark scene, be able to trace out some footsteps of the loving kindness and wisdom of God. And

First. The death of youth is agreeable to the method of the divine government in other instances. Flowers, insects and all living creatures, with the variety of their different species, are under the care of that universal Parent, whose inimitable hand paints the lilly, and whose condescending providence watches the sparrow's fall. We find that, with respect to trees and plants, a vast multitude of blossoms open and smile upon us, which fade and drop without giving any other appearance of beauty; and frequently the loaded branches are relieved of a very considerable burden by winds or storms, or by the quantity of their productions; before they reach a state of maturity and perfection. Amongst animals, great numbers never attain to the period of improvement and service, for which their powers and constitution are adapted, but are cut off while proceeding towards it: and perish as soon as they begin to answer the purpose of their place in the creation. The same failure prevails among our own kind: numbers, ere they ripen into manhood, are sent down to the regions where

where there is no work or device. The apparent waste in the former case, and the untimely exits in the latter, are both under the direction of the same infinite wisdom, and the intention in both may lie equally remote from our scanty views.

It is clear, that the fact, as it takes place with respect to rational beings, falls in with and promotes *one end*, which prevails under the divine government, I mean, the enjoyment of happiness in very different degrees. Every youth removed from our world causes a diversity of satisfactions in the condition of those with whom he is connected, and in the future existence of some intelligent creatures. His own rank and felicity in another life must be much affected by the untried state of the capacities with which he enters into it; by the attainments he has already reached in knowledge and virtue, and by his exemption from the snares to which a longer life would have exposed him. The present happiness of his friends, their religious temper, and their consequent share in the bliss of immortality will likewise be not a little influenced hereby.

The communication of happiness in various degrees, while it evidently appears to be the design of the original source of life in creation and providence,

providence, does not furnish any just ground of discontent: unless it were a rational matter of complaint, that we were not placed in the highest rank of beings, and rendered capable of the greatest felicity. Nay, we find the waste of blossom and unripe fruit is even necessary to the maturity of the remaining fruit: not less expedient, perhaps, may it be, for the religious and moral improvement of the human race, that some should fall short of the perfection of grown men and be nipped in their bloom.

It further deserves notice, that, in the present state, no such distinctions between men happen; as would be inconsistent with a state of trial: but this would be the case, if virtue were to be attended with a redemption from the grave: or if the vigour of early years was to be proof against the arrows of death. *This* would encourage a dissoluteness of manners: *that* would make a separation between the wicked and good, too glaring and overpowering. *This* would set the prospect of death too far off, to affect youth: *that* would render its sentence too discriminating, and lay too great a restraint upon our conduct. Either, so far from strengthening, would weaken the expectation of a future state. On the whole, the present constitution, which involves youth with

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advanced

advanced years in the same lot of mortality, appears agreeable to other instances of the divine government. Proceed we to observe,

Secondly, That the early death of youth is suited to teach *parents many useful lessons* in an affecting manner. [Our busy and inattentive hearts are too unapt to learn, and too ready to forget, the principles of religious virtue: even years do not always teach this wisdom. Or when the parental authority is employed to instil them into the opening minds of our offspring, they come from us rather as words of course than as the sentiments of a deeply affected mind. Whilst we are instructors to them, we need their death to admonish and teach ourselves. There are many truths nothing will so forcibly impress, as this distressing event.]

When the lively circle of children and youth is flourishing round our board, each word and action that betokens the opening virtues of humanity and piety, kindles the expectation and brightens the prospect of the dignity, virtue and usefulness with which they will appear on the stage of manhood, comfort our declining age, maintain our name in the world, and by which we shall, as it were, live and flourish again. Let
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the night of death cast its dark veil over any one of these ornaments of our family and house; then we find how transient and vain are all the hopes that earth's most pleasing objects inspire. Every beauty of person, every charm of growing life, which appeared to give firmness to our prospects, strengthens the conviction of their vanity. Our pleasing thoughts are broken off: a coffin and a grave are the melancholy trophies of our disappointed schemes.

And *now* the virtues, with which they bloomed, beget other and nobler views. We no longer anticipate the period, at which they would have ripened into manhood: but dwell on that time, when instead of surviving in them, we shall go to their exalted and approved spirits: and shall receive to our embraces a glorified saint. These new and heavenly hopes being raised in the parental breast, they now more sensibly feel, and more seriously think of, their own mortality. Their minds in these moments, being conversant with some of the most affecting scenes, contract a temper more suitable to their advanced years and the grave to which they are hastening. Such early exits can not fail to remind them of their own approaching evening.

Every time the image of the dear creature rises to the memory, the impresson is renewed ; and the recollection of the awakening providence is a constant monitor and warning to them, that their concluding days should be more regular and spiritual. Such convictions, of the vanity of the world and the progress of their days, dispose them more to fix their affections on God, who liveth for ever : and to form expectations of happiness from a being whose favour and perfections can not disappoint or fail. The heart becomes more disengaged for his service and love ; and in the bitterness of their spirits they learn the value of a rational confidence towards *him*, who can be better to them than ten children ; and who is disposed to grant a name and an inheritance better than that of sons and daughters.

And when, Christians, you have felt the death of a lovely child exciting these interesting lessons, and begetting a firmer attachment to the greatest and best of Beings, when you have experienced the gloomy scene to be so instructive and useful, have you not silenced every murmur, and acknowledged the reasonableness of resignation and of being soothed by its influence ? Finding that your loss gave your soul a sublimer direction to heaven and to an everlasting portion, you have seen the
wisdom

wisdom that visited you with distress; and the goodness that mixed up the bitter draught. Hence acquiescence in the divine will became a delight as well as a duty; and you have been ready to adore with thankfulness that heavenly parent, who removed from your sight the object of your fond affection, in order to fill up the vacancy with an object who alone deserves, and who alone can answer, the most intense regard.

This sweet submission will teach parents to behold with a more moderate, yet with a more rational and devout joy, their remaining comforts and surviving children. — This affecting memorial of the vanity of childhood and youth, and of the uncertainty of their lives, and the sacred power of that divine affection with which their hearts now aspire to God, will render parents not only better scholars, but also more improving instructors in the school of wisdom and virtue. They ought, and, by the grace of God, they will become more affectionate monitors and more perfect models to the rest of their offspring. They will be anxious by the earliest impressions of religion and goodness to prepare *them* for an immature death. And they are warned not to be so solicitous to treasure up wealth for them whose only portion perhaps may be a little coffin and shroud. Now if these affections and resolutions

be formed, if their cares and views are thus taught to flow in a purer channel; we see why the Sovereign of life calls parents to the tender contest of leaving their blooming delights in the grave.— But this dispensation has also a moral aspect of more extensive influence; for,

Thirdly, The death of youth has an apparent tendency to leave the best conviction on *the minds of all*. Who (according to the history in the text) can make one in the funeral of the only son of a widow, without being conscious to the tender overflow of pity and compassion? By such affecting scenes are the emotions of benevolent sympathy excited and improved: we are prompted to pour the healing balm of consolation into the wounded heart, and with a gentle hand to wipe off the tears from the declining head of age; when perhaps no son, or child, survives to perform the kind office. Hereby scope is given for the duties of humanity; our acquaintance is increased with the principles of consolation and the prospects, which immortality unfolds. The fortitude and resignation, with which we see the pious parent meets and supports so heavy an affliction, sensibly touches us with the excellency of his faith, and the happiness of his holy attainments. An example so tried shows the dignity of religion,
and

and the superior value of heavenly connections and heavenly hopes.

You follow, first! to the tomb what was once beauteous, sprightly and gay. The fair and engaging form is now a spectacle too disgusting to be exposed to view: the youth whose outward graces and mental charms, a few days since, pleased every eye, and enlivened every heart, is now the companion of worms. Where shall we learn the vanity and uncertainty of life, if not taught it by the grave of the young? The hoary head, which the weight of years lays in the dust, may remind us of the shortness of life, though it attains its longest date: but he only, who dieth in the morning of his days, teacheth us, that whilst "all flesh
" is grass; all *the glory and loveliness* of it is like
" the flower of the field."

You see the tender plant rooted up, and the glowing colours fade away on the withering buds; are you not instructed in the importance of turning to objects, that will encourage a firmer expectation and more lasting hopes. You are ready to own that all the prospects raised by the vigour of youth the strength of an unimpaired constitution, and the earliest habits of goodness, are only visions and dreams.

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You find by these instances of mortality ; that the continuance of the human race, the interests of communities, and the preservation of the church, depend not on the will and life of man ; but on the agency, presence and will of God : who is pleased to remove the most flourishing hopes of families, of towns, and of the evangelical kingdom ; that we may learn not to trust in sons and daughters, and the most promising children of men : *for their breath goeth forth, they return to the earth,* and that very day their thoughts, and all the pleasing schemes connected with their life, perish in the regions of forgetfulness and inactivity.— Hence we learn the triumphant accent of the apostle with respect to every interest, we account dear and valuable, and particularly the preservation and advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom : “ I know, whom I have believed ; and I “ am persuaded, he is able to keep what I have “ committed to him against that day.”

When you are called to wear the habits of mourning for those, who had not advanced nigh so far in life as yourselves ; for those who just begun to live for any valuable purpose, when they were summoned to die, will you presume on vigour and bloom : presume to forget your own death ; or to boast on length of years ?

Rather,

Rather, it is so just, so natural, so momentous a purpose; you should resolve to repair the loss sustained in their departure, by the vigorous employment of your riper powers; and by all the generous and noble services of a pious manhood. Let not this loss be aggravated by our criminal neglect of life; by our abuse of the continued gift of heaven. Let us be according to our sphere, what the rising supports of virtue, happiness and the church, promised to have been. Be it to our honour and the felicity of others; "that our days were not cut off in the midst." Knowing not, how soon the graves may be ready for us also; let this redouble our diligence and zeal. Such sentiments, so suitable to the dispensation we are considering, especially become *them*: who are most prone to forget them. This leads me to observe,

Fourthly, That the removal of youth by an untimely death teaches, in an awful manner, *the importance of early piety*. "Remember," says Solomon, "thy Creator in the days of thy youth: "whilst the evil days will not come." I would now take occasion to say, remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth; for these days, to many of you, may never come, to afford you the least opportunity for repentance. I say not this on
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the authority of my own judgment: the thickset and returning monuments of youth's mortality say this: your own minds and fears preach this lesson.

Need you attend to the observation suggested by the nature of the case: "that in your stage of life, chances multiply upon you: the seeds of disorders are sown by neglect; not to mention intemperance: infectious distempers are more easily contracted; when contracted, rage with greater violence; and the success in many cases is more doubtful; insomuch that they who have exercised themselves in computations of this kind, tell us that one half of the species, who are born into the world, go out of it again; and are all dead in so short a space, as the first seventeen years*."

Some awful instances of the truth of these remarks have lately fallen under our notice. You can not overlook those badges of mourning, in which many of us are arrayed. You have not so soon forgotten your own reflexions on the melancholy occasion. You have thought with yourselves, you might very likely receive the next

* Sterne's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 95.

visit

visit from the king of terrors, and next fall victims to his sentence, young and healthy as you find you are. These things being fresh in your memories, do not think it harsh in me, to read you a lecture of death and eternity. It would be strange and unkind, in my apprehension, did I not join in with your own reasonings to countenance and strengthen them. They are reasonings so proper and useful: I would wish you to retain a conviction of them! May the Great Father of our spirits engrave them on your hearts, as with the point of a diamond!

They teach you the reasonableness, the excellency, nay, the necessity of religion in persons of your age. They urge an immediate attention, and an immediate regard to the concerns of eternity. When you think on the dead; eternity no longer appears remote and distant. In this view various are the inducements, which press you to mind the one thing needful. Your *early* piety may be of infinite, it is certainly of vast consequence. If your existence be lengthened out through future years; each year will be a glorious addition to the services, bliss and honour of a worthy and useful life. If your strength be weakened by the way: how gladdening is it to think, that you will enter into the future regions and appear
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at the bar of God, with all the peculiar graces of early wisdom and goodness : that each friend of virtue, with your afflicted parents, will drop the tear of affection over your grave : and that the memory of your growing virtues will live in their minds, to sooth their anguish and to heal their wounded spirits.

Your exit you are sensible will pierce them through with bitter sorrows. You would not certainly run the danger of heightening their agonies by a vicious course. Duty and honour require a different conduct of you ; they require you to be pious and good betimes, that you may thus lay the foundation of a valuable life, or of a comfortable death : a death comfortable to all that love you, and pregnant with everlasting joy to yourselves.

As long as the names of your companions and acquaintance, that have left us (ah ! too, too soon for our wishes, but not too soon for their glory) ; as long as their names continue dear to you, you will not want a monitor to religious virtue. Follow their steps ; surpass them in their excellencies : in no very distant period you shall renew friendship with their good spirits, without being ever again called to the painful office of attending them

to their graves : an office not known in that world, where the vigour of youth for ever blooms. The mention of their felicity reminds me to observe in the

Fifth place, That this dispensation, which removes promising youth by death, is *certainly to their advantage*. [When parents see the enlivening object of their dearest regard sink into the grave ; they may be ready to wish that the same powerful friend had lived in their days, and by his almighty compassion had appeared for them, as for the distressed widow, when he spoke her only son to a new intercourse in the services and joys of a recovered life and vigour.

The Father, who dwelt in him and by whom he performed his great works, is indeed present, with his universal energy and authority, governing all things in heaven and earth.— They, whom CHRIST restored from the dead, during the period of his visible ministry on earth, were specimens of that kindness and power ; which preside over death and the unseen world. Delightful assurance ! That God and Father of all, who by the ministry of CHRIST turned the sorrows of a weeping widow into a torrent of joy, is near to watch the last
groan

groan of departing worth, and to take our dear children into the arms of his mercy.]

It is true! the agreeable prospects of their growing up the ornaments and supports of religion and blessings to the world are vanished. But then a prospect, with respect to them, more certain and not less gladdening, succeeds. If you desired to secure their piety and fix their happiness, it is done. They have reached that state; where no snares can seduce, no mistakes injure, and no griefs assail them. Not to say, you can not now meet the bitter disappointment of seeing them fall victims to human folly, vice and misery: they have escaped the dangers, to which your partial fondness and blinded views exposed them. And they have been taken hence by an heavenly Father; who, by the noblest culture, will ripen their faculties and virtues, who will enrich them with the most valuable possessions, and who will call them forth to sublimer and more successful services.

The dispensation which, as to us, suddenly blasts the bloom of youth, only removes the plant to an happier soil and calmer climes. The tender fears, with which its growth would have been watched are exchanged for the certain prospects of its flourishing

flourishing in the paradise of God. The best wishes, you could form for them, will be accomplished, without any further intervening temptations and hazards. And how painful soever, in one light, may be their sudden death: as the sure pledge of their glory and felicity, it should be regarded with a joyful sympathy. In the moment they laid aside all title to the inheritance you intended them; they became secure of a more glorious inheritance. Such an happy aspect has the removal of amiable and deserving youth on their own state and felicity.

This joined with the former considerations of its good tendency to instruct and improve the world, parents, and youth by impressing in an affecting manner, a variety of important lessons, is sufficient to convince us; that God is both wise and good, when he numbers our promising youth with the dead.

We can allow only a few words to the conclusion of this discourse. The subject has undoubtedly raised many a distressing and serious thought in all of us. It is the intent of the dispensation, we are considering, to excite such, and and it will be our wisdom to indulge them. It is a very affecting and useful event; when the growing

growing expectations of a family, of society and the church are buried in the dust: not to learn the lessons such a providence reads, is to aggravate the affliction, and to add to it the heavier evil of an unteachable mind.

Parents bleeding with these wounds, should most readily apply the balm of wisdom to sooth and heal their hearts; that whatever they have lost in an hopeful child, may be repaid in the sentiments of resignation, piety and morality: by which it forms their tempers and lives. Youth should learn, from following the amiable companions and objects of their friendship to the tomb, to consider their own latter end. Let us all learn the vanity of the world, the uncertainty of life, and the principles of divine confidence and trust.

Thus improved the death of lovely and promising youth will become very useful. The Great Governor of the world having seen fit to cut off, immaturity, the growing instruments of service, does even by this step render them truly serviceable. He calls them, not by a series of future words and deeds, as we would fondly imagine, but, by their dying breath to be the solemn monitors of wisdom, and the successful preachers of virtue.

virtue. They depart, to beget the spiritual life of some, and to improve that of many. Being dead; they speak the most interesting truths, and promote our truest welfare, by the lectures which their graves read.

Oh! may it be our care to regard the design of their removal! may the desolation of your houses, my dear friends, be always so instructive! then joy will mingle with all your sorrows, and even from your dying blossoms fair and nourishing fruit will spring up. May the children who survive after such melancholy breaches, be those friends of God, those patrons of religious virtue, and those blessings to the world, which you imagined the deceased were growing up to be!

Be it your concern and ambition, my young friends, that the loss, we bewail, should not be imbibed by your folly and vice. Our affection to you prompts us to pray, that you may be numbered with your companions, and mingle your dust with their precious remains, rather than you should live to become the votaries of sin, and to disappoint our virtuous hopes.

And may parents, through the tears, with which they mourn for their offspring, read the will of

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God,

God, who directs the fatal arrow; of that God, who gave his beloved Son for us, and takes away our sons and daughters to draw us to the enjoyment of himself, as the everlasting portion of our souls. Each virtuous and amiable child removed hence, has added one further charm and joy even to paradise itself.—And affords to us all a very useful spectacle, to warn us;—How to live—and how to die. May God make us all good scholars. *Amen.*

SER-

S E R M O N X.

Youth reminded of the Connexion between
the Conduct of Man in this Life and his
Condition in a future State.

GAL. vi. 7.

BE NOT DECEIVED: GOD IS NOT MOCKED:
FOR WHATSOEVER A MAN SOWETH, THAT
SHALL HE ALSO REAP.

MEN in general seem to forget and overlook those true and important notions of human life, which are founded in reason, and are every where taught in the system of revealed truths.—They do indeed (to allude to the text) regard this life as the seed time: and here also they reap their harvests. But what is the *seed* sown by them?—Lust, avarice, and ambition. And what are the *fruits* they gather in?—Sensual pleasure, wealth and power.

These are pursuits and labours very different from what become them, as men and Christians.

As such it becomes them to sow right affections, holy actions and good habits. In a future world is the harvest to take place. When immortality will pour in upon them its joys or sorrows. *This* is the scene of virtuous trial and exercise; *that* of rest and reward. And consequently on the improvement, or neglect of the present state depends our lot and portion hereafter. The words I have read, hold forth these truths. "Be not deceived; "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

These are sentiments of the greatest weight.—Truths which none but the wicked can doubt: none but the abandoned would despise: and which the most subtle cannot demonstrate to be false. May we feel their certainty and moment. They concern us, what station soever we fill up, or what period soever we have attained to in life. I would wish to make *youth* sensible of them; and to leave on their minds, in particular, a deep conviction of the tendency of their conduct through life; and of the connexion between their behaviour in this with their condition in a future world. An early and strong persuasion of this sentiment promises to have a very happy effect in fixing the good principles already received, and in forming their future manners. Indulge me then

then with your candid attention and humble prayers, whilst I attempt to prove to you,

First, That there is a certain and inseparable connexion between the conduct of men here and their state hereafter. And then shew you,

Secondly, That they who hope to escape misery or ensure happiness in opposition to this established order of the divine government, do only deceive themselves to their destruction.

First, I am to prove ; *that there is a certain and inseparable connexion between the conduct of men here, and their condition hereafter.* “Be not deceived ; God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption : but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.” i. e. He who is now holy, shall in a future state be happy : he, who is now sinful, shall then be miserable.— Goodness and life, vice and destruction are inseparable : they naturally flow from one another : and the sentence of God’s tribunal will establish this connexion for ever. To impress this truth on our minds we will,

1. Begin with the proof of it from analogy; or from *what takes place in the natural and material world*. With respect to the fruits of the earth, the seasons of the year, and the changes of the weather from the same causes constantly flow the same events and effects. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? The grain sown in the earth produces, regularly and at the like periods, fruits of the same kind with what was sown. The different seeds of plants, herbs and flowers uniformly grow up, bud and flourish in the different seasons and in the respective manner of their several species. Summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, day and night constantly succeed each other; and, without any variation or confusion, bring about the events suitable to their proper times and seasons. The kind influence of the sun and the return of fair weather, never fails to be beneficial to the growth and maturity of vegetables. Storms and hurricanes, thunder and lightening, are always followed with ruin, devastation and horror, in proportion to their vehemence and duration. Indeed all things in the material world conspire with exquisite exactness, to produce the most proper and regular effects. Since God has established such an order and disposition in the natural world:

world: is it not probable that he has appointed the same orderly connexion of things in the *moral* world? Doth this connexion in the former case subserve the purposes of growth and usefulness, contribute to the beauty of the creation, and show forth the wisdom of the Almighty Creator and Governor? Would not the same beauty, wisdom and usefulness be illustrated and displayed in the government and treatment of rational creatures, by a like regular and invariable disposition of causes and events? Shall harmony, exactness, and certainty be conspicuous in the inanimate and less noble part of the creation? and shall the moral and more excellent part be left exposed to disorder and confusion without any certain connexion and correspondence of events? Surely we can not think so: and then it will indubitably follow, that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." This truth may be confirmed,

2. By *an appeal to every man's conscience*. Let me ask, who can dispute the real and intrinsic difference between actions and affections? Who can affirm that piety, humility, meekness, justice and temperance are the same with profaneness, pride, wrath, injustice, luxury and drunkenness? Who can deny that the former are lovely, rational, and useful? and that the latter are odious, opposite

to our rational constitution, and injurious to society, to our bodies and our souls? And if every one must confess the real and unchangeable difference between good and evil: let me ask who can deny, who dare dispute that these actions and affections will be followed with different consequences according to their different natures?—What is lovely and rational can never produce the same effects with what is odious and irrational.

Let every one ask himself, what he indeed thinks will be the consequence of his actions? and every one's conscience will tell him, that piety and virtue will certainly insure peace, happiness and glory; and that sin and wickedness will as certainly be followed with uneasiness, misery and shame. And let every one ask himself further, whether he can really, only for the space of one day, be firmly and soberly established in the belief of the contrary? When his lusts, passions and sins incline him to suppose that no distinction will be made between the good and bad; doth not the opposite sentiment recoil and force itself upon his mind? And though he may choke it with cares, or drown it with the intoxicating cup for a time, can he entirely get rid of it? Doth it not still adhere to him? In his cool hours, in calm retirement,
under

under affliction or in the view of death, doth he not feel its power; must he not own and confess its truth?

What is the meaning of those throes and throbs of an accusing conscience? What is the cause of those fears and terrors, with which the wicked is haunted for actions to which no one is a witness, and for the thoughts which no eye can discern? Do they not forbode some future account, some consequences, he does not expect will result from them at present, but which will take place in another world? In a word, let any one say, whether sin and iniquity can wholly root out the persuasion of this truth, "that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap?" If not, every man has, in his own bosom, a constant and indisputable proof of the inseparable connexion between his present conduct and his future condition. To proceed,

3. This truth may be argued, from the *present* immediate consequences of piety and virtue, or of sin and folly. What are the natural and genuine consequences of justice and integrity, but reputation and credit? What the effects of sobriety and chastity, but health and vigour of body? What the fruits of meekness, benevolence and charity,

charity, but the esteem and affection of others? Of humility, devout resignation and pious gratitude, but inward serenity, satisfaction and peace?

On the contrary, injustice and deceit produce want of reputation and confidence : impurity and drunkenness cherish diseases and pains : avarice and uncharitableness entail on us hatred, and provoke the curses of the fatherless and widow : uneasiness, the dominion of turbulent passions, heart-gnawing grief, an enemy of all enjoyment, are the consequences of pride, anger and discontent : divine entertainments, animated hope and rational joys *now* flow from religion and goodness : the reproaches of conscience, shame, disgrace and fear are *now* the effects of sin and vice.

If these things take place in this state of imperfection : if such be the method of God's judicial government in *this* world, how constantly and invariably will these things take place in a more perfect state ? How much more clearly will the fruits of vice and virtue appear to be happiness and misery on a day of retribution. If such be the connexion of actions and events, of the habits of goodness or of sin with bliss or infelicity at present : from whose will does this connexion arise, but from the will of the Great Governor

Governor of the Universe ; who hath fixed this succession of things, and hath thus shewn his dislike to sin and his approbation of holiness : who thus appears at present on the side of virtue : and therefore we may expect will hereafter, more gloriously, more awfully, and conspicuously appear to reward goodness and punish iniquity.

[Piety and virtue, sin and wickedness, are connected with bliss and woe even in this state : but this is not a finished state : therefore this scheme of government will be carried on to greater perfection in another : where consequently the distinction between goodness and iniquity will be more completely established and more evidently regarded. So that whatsoever a man now sows ; he shall reap then,] This is clear,

4. From *the perfections of God*. He hath a perfect knowledge of the various actions and different affections of every being : so that no ignorance can mislead his judgment, and no art can conceal us from his notice. He is a Being of perfect rectitude, always doing what is right and fit. He must treat his creatures and subjects therefore according to their different tempers and characters : being infinitely holy in his own nature, he can approve of none but the holy and virtuous :

virtuous : these only can he reward, and others he will punish according to their demerits.

To suppose the contrary, is to entertain the most injurious and dishonourable apprehensions of the Great God ; it is to destroy his moral character and to efface from men's minds all true notions of him. If we presume on the mercy of our heavenly Father, that he will be prevailed on to neglect the distinction between virtue and vice, in his final dealings with his creatures, we form a false and deceitful apprehension of his mercy : for as only things possible are the objects of power ; and things fit the objects of wisdom ; so God's mercy can be extended to none but to those who are the proper objects of it : amongst whom the impenitent can not be reckoned : having not only violated the law of God, and affronted the divine government, but persisted also in such a course to the end.

[The Almighty must either cease to be righteous and holy ; or he will reward holiness and punish sin : as to the first, to assert it is blasphemy ; and that it should take place, is impossible : the second is therefore certain, and it follows ; “ that he who soweth to the flesh,
“ shall

“ shall of the flesh reap corruption : but he that
“ soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life
“ everlasting.”]

5. The impartiality of the divine government and tribunal, affords another evidence of the same truth. The apostle founds it on the same principle. Rom. ii. 6. “ God,” says he, “ will render
“ to every man according to his deeds : for with
“ him there is no respect of persons.” The Great God looketh not on the outward appearance, but looketh at the heart. He regardeth not the external distinctions of wealth or rank, or beauty or wisdom. No professions of religion, no ostentations of piety and virtue can affect the process of his bar. Neither can any rewards bribe him from the exercise of strict justice. He taketh no gifts.

His perfections and greatness exalt him above any such influences. He is infinitely happy in himself. With the clearest discernment doth he penetrate into the nature and value of every claim to his favour. And the equity of his tribunal, of its enquiries, laws and decisions results from the infinite rectitude which he possesseth. Poor and rich are equally the work of his hands; the former cannot escape his notice; nor are the
persons

persons of the rich great in his view. They whose rank and station, whose wealth and power may command the homage of the lip, and the bending knee from them who detest their actions and despise their characters, such must not expect or hope for any regard, on these accounts, at the bar of God. Titles, estates and honours have no power in the court of heaven; unless to aggravate the crimes and to increase the punishment of those who have possessed and abused them to pride and intemperance, injustice and luxury.

Let us attend to this, and it will weaken, it will prevent those impressions in favour of iniquity and sin; which the examples of the great wicked have too powerful a tendency to leave on the mind. In a word as there is no respect of persons with God, let this truth be ever remembered, that nothing but real holiness, the practice of virtue and substantial goodness will avail us any thing at his bar.

6. and Lastly. This is the doctrine of *many passages of holy writ*. It is expressly contained in the text: and is not less plainly and strongly asserted in numerous other places. To refer you to some. "Light is sown for the righteous; and gladness for

“for the upright in heart*.” “To him that soweth
 “righteousness, shall be a sure reward†.” “He
 “that soweth iniquity, shall reap vanity‡.” “The
 “harvest is the end of the world; and the rea-
 “pers are the angels. As therefore the tares are
 “gathered and burnt in the fire; so shall it be in
 “the end of this world. The Son of man shall
 “send forth his angels, and they shall gather out
 “of his kingdom all things that offend, and them
 “which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a fur-
 “nace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing
 “of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth
 “as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father§.”
 “Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same
 “shall he receive of the LORD; but he that doeth
 “wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he
 “hath done||.” “The Son of man shall come in
 “the glory of his Father, with his angels; and
 “then he shall reward every man according to
 “his works¶.” To these authorities let the well
 known description of the final judgment in Mat-
 thew xxv. be added.

These declarations are strong and cogent proofs
 of the point in hand. If the account of scenes to

* Psal. xcvi. 11. † Prov. xi. 18. ‡ Prov. xxii. 8.
 § Matt. xiii. 39—43. || Eph. vi. 8. Col. iii. 25.
 ¶ Matt. xvi. 27.

be hereafter displayed, though at present invisible and distant, can interest us: if truths, that are supported with all the weight of God's authority, can move us: and if we are not resolved to neglect God, our duty and eternity: these declarations will rouse our souls to the pursuit of pious virtue, and awefully restrain us from every sin.— They cannot be neglected, but at our infinite peril. But this brings us to observe,

Secondly, *That they, who hope to escape misery, or ensure happiness, in opposition to this established order of the divine government, do only deceive themselves to their own destruction.*—

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for
“whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also
“reap.”

There is nothing of so great concern to us, as what shall become of us, when this state is no more; there is nothing, about which we should be so solicitous and careful as our future welfare and eternal salvation. And yet alas! there is nothing, about which men employ their thoughts so little; and in which they are so easily imposed upon. Here they seem glad to practise the arts of self-deceit, and contrive expedients to persuade themselves it shall go well with them hereafter.—

How eagerly do men catch at, how closely adhere to, and how zealously defend any doctrines or

prin-

principles; which may answer this end. How confidently do they expect every thing from the mercy of God, or the merits of the Redeemer, or a sound faith, or a warm profession, or a partial and fruitless repentance.

Being inclined to hope the best of their state, they are easily misled: and readily embrace every thing, that may mislead them into a good opinion of themselves and their condition, with the least mortification and labour. Thus they are carried off from the pursuit of substantial goodness, and are led aside from the road of truth and virtue. Their attention is directed to the easiest points, that bear the name of religion, to the forms and appendages of godliness. They substitute something else in the place of real and uniform obedience: a zeal for the church, a constant round of ceremonies, the great appearances of humility and self-denial, an ill-directed and bigotted zeal for the honour, person and righteousness of the SAVIOUR, and a great exactness in such things, as the tything of mint, anise and cummin serve in the room of an active and diffusive benevolence, strict justice, meekness, candour, piety, and the weightier matters of the law.— But this is not dealing fairly and honestly with ourselves: this is cheating our souls of eternal

salvation by tricks, and cunning, and art. This is to bring ourselves to believe that we "are rich" and increased with goods and have need of "nothing:" when we really are "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."— This is flattering ourselves with the hope of immortality, whilst we are walking in the road to destruction.

But however we may delude ourselves by first wishing, and then also imagining, that other things will answer our purpose, as well as universal and persevering righteousness, yet God is not mocked. All our arts and evasions are vain with respect to him. Our affections, our actions, the habits we have contracted, will determine our character, and fix our state in his judgment: by which we must stand, or fall. Oh! let us not thus impose on ourselves. As we love ourselves, let us by all means guard against this deceit. Let us remember, that the rule in the text, if either reason or revelation is to be trusted, will assuredly take place. This principle is as firm as heaven, and as certain as that there is a God. Let it then sink deep into our minds: it is established on so much evidence; it is so founded on truth and equity: it ought never, never to be forgotten by us.

To

To leave, my young friends, indelible traces of it on your minds, hath been the design of this discourse. It is of great moment to yourselves that you entertain just sentiments of your life and of the consequences of your present behaviour. The sentiments that have been now laid before you are of the utmost concern to *every rational* creature. The interest *you* have in them can not be overlooked. For they are the root and support of all religion and virtue; so a firm persuasion of their truth will give a stability to all your early purposes for goodness; which under the divine aid, neither the warmth of youthful passions, nor the ensnaring maxims of the wicked and abandoned, will be able to shake.

It is no wonder, when you are witnesses to the wide reign of iniquity under different forms, to the gross immoralities of many, to the careless indifference with which religion and futurity are treated by the generality, and even by the more polite, sensible and refined part of mankind, and to the effrontery, with which the sons of prodigality and vice laugh at the restraints of piety and virtue: it will not be surprising amidst such apparent disbelief, if not contempt of religious obligations and principles, you should be inclined in some gay moments to regard a sober conduct as a needless scrupulosity, and the truths of religion

as the invention of policy in priests and statesmen, or the fruits of superstition imbibed in your earliest years.

What hath been observed furnishes an unanswerable reply to these suggestions: *a reply*, read to us by the whole course of nature with a striking voice: engraven with deep and lasting characters on the human heart: confirmed by our daily experience of the present consequences of human conduct: receiving the strongest support from the nature of the divine perfections and government; and which the books of sacred truth and everlasting life labour, in innumerable declarations, to teach us.

From these things you learn to form an estimate of human life affecting and momentous to the highest degree. *What the seed-time is to the harvest that is the present life to eternity.* This is the season for cultivating good affections, performing good actions and establishing good habits. Hereupon much depends in this life, and in the next our *all*. Improve life and you will be happy: neglect it and you will be miserable.

Remember that the vigour of youth constitutes not only a pleasing, but an important part of human life. The activity of this stage is peculiarly fitted

fitted for the labours of the seed-time: and it will certainly enter into the account of a future reckoning and retribution. Besides, what can be more proper or serviceable, than on the entrance of a state, which extends itself into eternity to make a pause, and survey the road before us? For the thoughts, views and temper with which we begin our course, will strongly influence our future deportment: as the first and succeeding stages of life will fix our condition beyond the grave. Your existence is not a toy or a trifle, which you may throw away or abuse. Let not your prospects terminate in the tomb: the consequences of life do not. Eternity depends upon it. *Lay your schemes for eternity.*

Attend to these things: and learn to think highly of your existence and your behaviour here. Attend to them and act virtuously and nobly. Sow the seeds of purity, and goodness, and truth: and though the important culture should be attended with some fatigue and pain, with the tears of repentance and the sorrows of a combat: a glorious harvest of honour, triumph and bliss awaiteth you. View the virtuous dispositions and holy habits ripening for this rich and enlivening season with the eye of devout pleasure: and with quickness, vigour and zeal, press towards it.

But if you sow to the flesh ; if you come under the power of vicious inclinations and persevere in a course of sin ; what will you, *in that case*, have to receive ? Not surely happiness, nor the approbation of the Great LORD of the harvest ; nor even an exemption from corruption and death. For *then* the world would not be judged in righteousness and truth : *then* men would not reap what they have sowed : nor would *you* receive according to the things done, with repeated delight, in the body.

PRAYERS.

P R A Y E R S.

*A Prayer for a young Person determining
for a religious Life.*

O THOU infinitely great, ever blessed and ever glorious Being; I look up unto thee, as the Almighty, Creator and constant Preserver of all things. With reverence I bow before thee, as the righteous and holy Sovereign of heaven and earth. I approach thee, with joy and hope, as my Father who art in heaven. Thou art the God, in whose hands my breath is, and whose are all my ways. By thee was I fearfully and wonderfully made: by thee have I been constantly and graciously guarded and protected; by thy bounty fed and clothed, and by thy visitation upheld in being. Wherever I turn my eyes, I behold the most evident proofs and manifestations of thy existence, presence and power.

It becometh me to glorify and serve thee with my body and spirit, which are thine. Every sentiment of adoration and gratitude, which my heart can feel, is due to thee the Father of spirits and the

God of my life. Every act of obedience, every instance of homage and submission is due to thee my Sovereign and my Judge. How much more am I indebted to thee, O Father of mercies, for the richer blessings of thy grace, for the instructions and promises of thy word, for the example and sufferings of JESUS CHRIST, the ambassador of thy mercy, and for all the wonderful provision which thou hast made for the pardon of my sins and the salvation of my soul. What shall I render unto thee, O God, who choosest our inheritance for us, that, in early life, I was led into the knowledge of thyself, the only true God, and of JESUS CHRIST whom thou hast sent, whom to know is eternal life. Everlasting thanks for those gracious disposals of thy providence, by which I have been favoured with the advantages of good instructions and good examples, by which I have been kept from the great snares and temptations of life, and by which a taste for serious and heavenly things and for virtuous pursuits hath been given to my tender and youthful heart.

Shall it be in vain that thou hast displayed to me thy mercy and goodness? Shall it be in vain that thou hast poured upon me the blessings of thy providence and grace? Shall it be in vain,
that

that I have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD, and, in my first years, have been taught thy truth and the things of my everlasting peace?

By thy gracious assistance, O heavenly Father, these favours shall not be lost upon me. I feel the claim, that thou hast to my gratitude and service. I feel the authority of that Prophet and SAVIOUR, whom thou hast raised up to bless those who turn from their iniquities, even JESUS whom thou hast made LORD and CHRIST. I am convinced, that religion is the highest wisdom; that its truths are supported by the clearest evidence; that the blessings it offers are most needful and important; that the fruits of it are present comfort, peace and joy; and that the final issue of it will be eternal life. "I am convinced, O LORD, that sooner or later, religion must be my serious care, or I am undone."

I humbly and penitently yield to these convictions. With all seriousness and solemnity would I, from this time, from this moment, devote myself, O my God, to thy fear and service, according to the precepts of thy Son's gospel, with a grateful acceptance of him as my LORD and SAVIOUR, and earnestly imploring thy mercy, thy
for-

forgiveness and favour through him. "Take
 "thou the full possession of my heart, and help
 "me to make an unfeigned surrender of all that
 "I am, and all that I have to thee, the great pro-
 "prietor of all. With purpose of heart would I
 'cleave unto thee: O keep me close to thyself."
 May I live by faith in thy perfections and provi-
 dence, and in JESUS CHRIST whom thou hast sent.
 Deeply may the principles of faith be fixed in my
 heart: habitually may they form my temper and
 manners. May nothing be able to separate me
 from thy love. I am, LORD, henceforth, thy de-
 voted servant: I am the disciple of thy Son. Never
 may any considerations, never may any temptations,
 neither the warmth of youthful passions, nor the
 views of ambition and interest in riper life, draw
 me aside from these holy engagements. Firm
 may be my purposes: constant and persevering,
 through every period of life, my attachment to God
 and CHRIST. Never may I let go the hope of
 my holy and heavenly calling, but finish my
 course with joy; and, at the end of my Christian
 course, lay hold of that eternal life, which is thy
 gift in JESUS CHRIST. *Amen, and Amen.*

A Morn-

A Morning Prayer for a young Person.

O LORD, my heavenly Father, the Creator, Preserver and Governor of all things. With thee is the fountain of life and happiness. Thou causest the light to shine out of darkness and renewest the face of nature. Every day will I wait upon thee, for in thee are all the springs of comfort and being. "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee and look up." Great art thou, O LORD GOD Almighty, and greatly to be revered: good art thou, O most merciful and gracious God, and greatly to be praised. Many, O LORD GOD, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done: as for me I will come unto thee in the multitude of thy mercies; and, with humble confidence and fervent gratitude, bow before thy throne.

The life which thou hast given me, the powers with which thou hast endowed me, the blessings which thou hast bestowed upon me, call on me to praise thy goodness. Thou art the God of my life and the length of my days. Thou wert the protector of my childhood: thou art the guide of my youth. Day unto day uttereth thy loving kindness,

kindness, and declareth thy faithfulness and truth. I laid me down and slept in safety and peace : I have awaked refreshed and in health, because thou hast sustained me. Thy goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And, for ever, blessed be thy abundant mercy in CHRIST JESUS, by whom thou hast given us the words of eternal life, and taught us to look for an eternal day of glory and bliss.

With the return of the morning dost thou renew unto me thy loving kindness, open again thy stores for my support and enjoyment, and restore me to a capacity to serve and glorify thee. With the return of the morning, O God of my life, I esteem it my wisdom and duty to devote myself to thee ; and my happiness and privilege to repose my hope and trust in thee. Various are the duties, which lie before me : many are the snares, which beset me : severe may be the trials, to which I may be called. My wisdom is but ignorance : my strength but weakness : while every thing, O my God, my comfort and usefulness here, and my happiness hereafter dependeth upon my right conduct. Known unto thee are my dangers and difficulties. Be thou my present and daily help. May I be in thy fear all the day long. May my devotions be humble, sincere and fervent.

fervent. May uprightneſs and integrity preſerve
 me, and my worldly buſineſs be purſued under
 thy authority and preſence, and with a regard to
 thy acceptance and glory. May not the moſt
 unbended moments of life betray me into ſin and
 folly. Ever may I be able to preſerve the com-
 poſure and ſeriousneſs of my mind and the purity
 of my character. In the management of my
 calling may I be diſcreet and juſt: in the hours
 of relaxation may my amuſements be manly and
 rational, and my pleaſures ſober and innocent.
 May my whole deportment be virtuous and
 lovely; my words thoſe of truth and kindneſs;
 my mind meek and humble, and my heart bene-
 volent, generous and compaſſionate. Endue me
 with fortitude to reſiſt every temptation. Warm
 my breaſt, in the enjoyment of every bleſſing,
 with devout gratitude; and aſſiſt me to bear
 affliction with patience and ſubmiſſion. Suffer
 not my heart to indulge any ſinful paſſion, or to
 entertain any evil thoughts. Help me to look
 forward to the end of my life and to prepare for
 it. Aſſiſt me to ſow the ſeeds of divine know-
 ledge, of religious wiſdom, of encreaſing virtue
 now, and may I reap the harveſt of glory and joy
 hereafter; having ſown to the ſpirit, of the ſpirit
 may I reap life everlaſting. Through all future
 ſcenes may thy power be my defence, may thy
 counſels

consels guide me, thy presence encompass me, thy providence be my refuge, thy favour my animating motive to perseverance in well doing, and the days of my frail mortal life be succeeded and crowned with thy everlasting mercy in JESUS CHRIST: for whom I praise thee, as thy greatest and best gift: and through whom I would ascribe unto thee, the Most High, all glory and praise. Let the people praise thee, O LORD; let all the people praise thee through JESUS CHRIST, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Prayer, from our LORD's Sermon on the Mount, for any Part of the Day, when Leisure for devout Retirement offers.*

HOLY and ever blessed God, King of Kings and LORD of Lords, the righteous LORD, who lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity; what concerned me so much as to approve myself in thy eye? What is so much my interest and duty as to know and do thy perfect and acceptable will? I thank thee and praise thee for the intimations thou hast given of thy holy nature and will, of my duty and most essential interests, by

* This Prayer was suggested by, and partly borrowed from, a similar one in Dr. Dalrymple's *Family Worship explained*, p. 236.

the united lights of reason and revelation. I thank thee, especially, for those sublime and heavenly principles of conduct, which thou hast communicated to us, through JESUS CHRIST, the way, the truth, and the life. May his words sink deep into my heart, and his rules be present to my serious recollection. I would devoutly retire to think on them, to bring them to my remembrance, and, in thy presence, to lay my heart open to their authority. Assist me, O God of all truth and grace, to conform my temper and life wholly to them. Grant me such measures of thy grace, as will render me poor in spirit, humble and contrite, slow to anger, and ever disposed to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Endue me with merciful and liberal dispositions. Make me pure in heart, peaceable in my own temper, and attentive to the things which make for peace. Prepare me, if called to it, to suffer persecution and to bear reviling and all manner of evil speaking against me falsely for thy sake. Root out of my heart all enmity to others, and incline me, ere I approach thy altar, to seek reconciliation with them against whom I have ought, or who have ought against me. Preserve me from profaning thy name by false or careless oaths: may my conversation be ever guarded, and my words be in simplicity and truth. O thou, beneficent Being,
who

who givest to all men liberally, whose sun shines, whose rain descends on the evil and good, preserve me from all hatred and revenge; dispose me to be kind and liberal, to give readily to him that asketh me, to love with pity my causeless or bitter enemies, to bless them, to do them good, and to pray for them. Suffer not ostentation, or a love to the praise of men, to corrupt my deeds of charity or acts of piety. May my benevolence be undissembled and my devotion unfeigned.— Suffer not my heart to be covetously set on uncertain riches; but in heaven may I lay up my treasure; there may my thoughts and heart be. May no anxious cares, what I shall eat, or what I shall drink, or how I shall be clothed, disturb my mind: but may the kingdom of God and his righteousness be the first object of my choice and the chief object of my pursuit. Guard me from admitting harsh thoughts, or indulging severe censures of others: and endue me with wisdom to discern and correct my own errors and faults.— Wisdom and strength for this and every other holy deed I humbly and earnestly implore from thee, heavenly Father; while I seek may I find, while I ask may I receive all good things. Help me to maintain in my conduct to others that equity and kindness which I expect from them; and whatsoever I would, that men should do to me

me, may I conscientiously do the same to them.—
 Guide me into that strait gate, which leadeth unto
 life. Preserve me from the paths of the seducer.
 Draw me off from all vain confidence in a professed
 reverence to CHRIST my SAVIOUR, while I prac-
 tically disregard him. Grant, O heavenly Father,
 that I may do thy will, that I may hear and obey
 the sayings of CHRIST, and be for ever blessed
 in my deed. *Amen.*

*Another Prayer to be used at any Time of
 the Day*.*

O LORD, the great Creator and Governor of
 all things, I bow before thee, with all hu-
 mility of soul and body. All thy works praise
 thee; the children of men ought more particu-
 larly to bless thee and to magnify thy name.—
 Ever may my heart feel, ever may it be disposed
 to acknowledge, my dependance upon thee for thy
 constant care and goodness to me ever since I was
 born. The mercies of every hour call for my
 grateful acknowledgments. In these moments
 of devout recollection I thank thee, the author
 of my being and of my enjoyments, for that
 watchful providence which hath guarded me from

* This Prayer is borrowed from Bp. Patrick; but with
 alterations.

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many

many dangers, and for that beneficence which hath supplied me with various good things, as well for the comfort and pleasure as for the necessary support of this present life. Especially, I admire and adore, with gratitude, thy exceeding great love in the LORD JESUS, through whom thou hast given me good hope of better enjoyment in the life to come, by following that example and obeying those holy instructions which he hath set before me. It is all reason, O LORD, that through every day and every moment of my life, I should love thee and entirely trust in thee, and most willingly serve and obey thee. Here I again devote myself to thee, and in thy great mercies which have been so tender and so abundant toward me, I would still hope. On thee is my dependance, for what thou seest to be necessary and profitable to me. To thy will may I be resigned: with that condition, wherein thou placest me, may I rest contented and satisfied. Fix in my mind a firm and joyful persuasion that thou orderest all things in heaven and earth; and takest the greatest care of those that wait upon thee, and commit themselves unto thee, as I now do, in confidence of thy goodness and in submission to thy pleasure. I hope in thine everlasting mercies, that thou wilt pardon all my forgetfulness of thee and disobedience to thy precepts. I most earnestly implore thy continual aids, to
preserve,

preserve, in my mind, a powerful sense of thee, and ardent love to thee, and an holy care to please and obey thee in all things. May the same mind and spirit, which was in CHRIST JESUS dwell in me; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and the fear of thee; the spirit of meekness, humility, purity and charity; that I may do thy will with such cheerfulness, zeal and constancy; with such a regard to thy glory, and such a love to mankind as he did. Blessed be thy great goodness for what I have already attained, for the assistance thou hast given me and the happy opportunities I have enjoyed of improving myself in true wisdom, virtue and piety. It is my earnest desire to grow in each, and to be made perfectly like my divine master and SAVIOUR, by whom all honour and glory be given unto thee, O Father Almighty, to the end of the world. *Amen.*

An Evening Prayer for a young Person.

O THOU everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth, who faintest not, neither art weary, I would extol thee, O God, my guardian and my benefactor, my father and friend; and bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day would I bless thee, and praise thy name through

all the stages of my life, for thou art great, and thy greatness is unsearchable: flow to anger art thou and of goodness unspeakable. The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thy hand and satisfiest the desires of every living thing. Thou art righteous in all thy ways and holy in all thy works. Thou art nigh to all that call upon thee, to all that call upon thee in truth. My mouth shall speak thy praise and all my powers shall bless thy holy name. To thee, O Almighty God, who by wisdom hast made the heavens; to thee who didst appoint the sun to rule the day, the moon and stars to rule the night; to thee who gavest me being, and hast redeemed my life from destruction; to thee whose bounties have supplied my wants, and whose goodness hath abundantly ministered to my enjoyments; to thee, O God of my life, who hast conducted me through the past day, and brought me to this evening, surrounded with various mercies; to thee, who hast given me the true bread from heaven and blest me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things, in CHRIST JESUS, and hast encouraged me to hope for the forgiveness of my sins and eternal life; to thee, O Father of mercies be glory and praise; the most thankful acknowledgments of my heart and lips, now and for ever.

It

It becometh me, O Holy God, the witness of my conduct, to look upon the many instances of forgetfulness to thee and thy goodness, and of disobedience to thy precepts, with grief and shame; with grief and remorse may I think upon my sins, and with unfeigned penitence humble myself before thee. My hope is in thy mercy: I rejoice in thee as "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin;" merciful is thy nature, and a covenant of grace and forgiveness hast thou established with us by JESUS CHRIST. Fulfil unto me, according to the sincerity of my repentance and future obedience, the promises of thy word; and be merciful to my past failings and transgressions.

Enable me, for the time to come, to act a wise part and to live an holy, righteous life in all godliness and virtue. "Let not my heart be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin:" but melt it by thy goodness, and subdue it to the authority of thy law. Give me a taste for the pleasures of devotion and goodness. "Let my thoughts be employed on the best things; refine and spiritualize my affections; elevate and ennoble my pursuits; quicken my desires after thee; and help me with purpose of heart to cleave to thee, the LORD." Possess me with all kind
dispo-

dispositions to my fellow-men, and fellow-Christians; may my charity be fervent and universal; and ever may I be ready to every good office in my power. On rational and scriptural grounds may I be able to look forwards to the end of my days and to the night of death with composure and good hope, and on the morning of the resurrection awake to life and glory. May thy watchful providence guard the slumbers of the ensuing night from evil and thy goodness render my sleep comfortable and refreshing: and, with lively, grateful devotions, may my heart meet the return of the morning and the fresh openings of thy goodness.

May that goodness, and especially the manifestations of it through JESUS CHRIST, be known to all the earth; and by all the earth may it be adored and improved. May it bless my country with the continuance of every civil and every religious advantage: may it comfort and relieve the afflicted: may it be the confidence and joy of my relatives and friends. Let all the world rejoice in it, and a hymn of praise arise from every mouth and every heart. I would humbly rejoice and trust in it and magnify it with all my powers. O God, the best of beings, all glory and praise be given unto thee, through JESUS CHRIST. Amen.

-collib

A Morn-

A Morning or Evening Prayer for Families.

ALMIGHTY, supreme, and gracious Sovereign, of whom the whole family, in heaven and earth, is named. Worthy art thou of the adoration of the most exalted spirits that surround thy throne; much more art thou worthy of the humble homage of the children of men, and of the various tribes that dwell on earth. We adore and worship thee, as the Being who dwellest on high and we admire thy condescension, that thou humblest thyself to behold the things that are done in heaven and on earth. To thee, O God, encouraged by thy goodness and drawn by thy mercies, let our veneration, gratitude and homage be paid; for to thee are they ever due. Thou, who rulest over all and who placest the solitary in families, hast chosen our inheritance for us, and united us together by the ties of love and kindred. We are thy creatures, the objects of thy care and the beneficiaries of thy bounty. Before thee we bow as thy humble and grateful dependents: to thee we look up with united affection, and with faith and hope, as heirs together of the grace of life. Thou hast spread our table for us, watched over our felicity, made us blessings to each other, and called us to share in the same spiritual blessings, and

and to the same heavenly hopes. With one mind and with one mouth would we glorify thee, our God and Father, the Father of our LORD and SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST. We thank thee and praise thee for all the good things, that thou hast bestowed upon us: and for that care and kindness which we have experienced the past day (or *past night*).

We now commit ourselves again to thy mercy and goodness. Let thy mercy forgive our sins, and thy goodness provide for us and defend us. In the hours of sleep may we rest in safety under thy protection: in the hours of light and activity may we be fervent in spirit, serving the LORD. Whether we wake, or sleep, may we be thine, such as thou wilt approve and bless; devoted to thy glory, and having an unchangeable interest in thy love and favour. To all our fellow creatures may we act with integrity and kindness. Help us to serve one another in love, bearing one another's burdens, assisting one another's temporal and spiritual welfare, exercising mutual forbearance and sympathy, living together as the heirs of immortality. May love reign in our hearts and peace in our dwelling: and the God of love and peace be with us. Assist and prosper the honest labour of our hands. Preserve our health and spare our lives.

lives; and, if it seemeth good in thy sight, keep sickness and calamity from our house. May we eat our bread and partake of the bounties of thy providence, with mutual affection and devout cheerfulness. "Make us blessings to each other and to all around us, as long as thou art pleased to continue us together in life; that thus beginning the life of heaven here we may attain to the full enjoyment of it hereafter."

May all the families on earth be partakers with us, in the same blessings of union, piety, virtue and faith. May thy goodness and mercy follow all those who are related to us. Prepare them and us, for all the changes of this uncertain life: and when we have, piously and benevolently, served thee and one another here, may we be joined to the glorious family of saints and angels above. All we ask, relying on thy mercy, through JESUS CHRIST, by whom be given unto thee, the Father Almighty, our Father in heaven, glory in the highest. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

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